

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1862
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Syrian Network for Human Rights
Titel:	On the 12th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising: A Total of 230,224 Civilians Documented as Dead, including 15,275 Who Died due to Torture, 154,871 Arrested and/or Forcibly Disappeared, and Roughly 14 Million Syrians Displaced
Udgivet:	15. marts 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	26. juni 2023

On the 12th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising

A Total of **230,224** Civilians
Documented as Dead, including **15,275**
Who Died due to Torture, **154,871** Arrested
and/or Forcibly Disappeared, and Roughly
14 Million Syrians Displaced

A Democratic Political Transition
is the Principal Demand of the
12-Year Popular Uprising

Wednesday 15 March 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.

Contents

I. The 12th Annual Report, Figures on Human Losses Updated.....	1
II. Large Changes in Territority in line With Military Developments, and Air Power are the Primary Cause of Killings, Destruction, and Displacement	2
III. Detailed Account of the Most Notable Violations in Syria in the Last 12 Years as Documented on SNHR's Database.....	6
IV. The International Community Has Miserably Failed in Bringing About a Resolution to the Syrian Conflict and in Realizing a Political Transition	24
V. Politicization of the Humanitarian Assistance Issue Since 2014 Has Exacerbated the Damage of the February 6 Earthquake	27
VI. All the Syrian Regime's Amnesty Decrees Have Resulted in the Release of Only 7,351 Arbitrarily Arrested Detainees, With the Regime Still Holding Roughly 135,253 Detainees/Forcibly Disappeared Persons	28
VII. Enforced Disappearance Issue is the Ghost that Haunts the Families of the Missing, With Serious Concerns for the Fates of Nearly 112,000 Syrian Citizens	29
VIII. Syria is Not Safe for its Remaining Residents, Let Alone for the Return of Refugees	31
IX. After Having Committed Serious Violations and Crimes Against Humanity, Attempts are being Made to Rehabilitate the Syrian Regime	33
X. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	34
Acknowledgment and Condolences	40

I. The 12th Annual Report, Figures on Human Losses Updated

Twelve years ago, the Syrian people took to the street to rightfully effect a political change that would enable Syria to break free from decades of hereditary dictatorship towards democratic elections, dignity, and freedom and finally escape the authoritarian clutches of the ruling regime's security apparatus. It did not take long for the protests to spread across the whole of Syria, growing and continuing for months, despite the Syrian regime's immediate, typically brutal response of live bullets and widespread arrests in which hundreds of demonstrators were arrested and brutally tortured. Indeed, many of those arrested in those early days died due to torture, while others went on to be classified as forcibly disappeared, maintaining that status to this very day. All of this happened while the UN Security Council and the international community passively stood by rather than putting an end to the Syrian regime's violations which reached the levels of crimes against humanity. Eventually, the popular uprising was transformed into an internal armed conflict in the first quarter of 2012, one year after the peaceful protests began, with multiple parties subsequently entering into the conflict and prolonging the Syrian tragedy.

Throughout the past 12 years, the Syrian regime has perpetrated the most terrible atrocities. At every point, the Syrian regime has far exceeded all the other parties to the conflict, individually or collectively, in terms of the magnitude and sheer quantity of the violations, killing hundreds of thousands of individuals and forcibly disappearing tens of thousands of others, while thousands of victims died slowly and agonizingly due to torture at the hands of the regime's torturers. In fact, torture is one of a vast number of violations which we at the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) have documented in our regularly updated records stored on our specially established databases for the past 12 years up to the current day, based on our daily and constant monitoring by our team, both those on the ground in Syria and abroad. You can find out details about SNHR's work methodology [at this link](#).

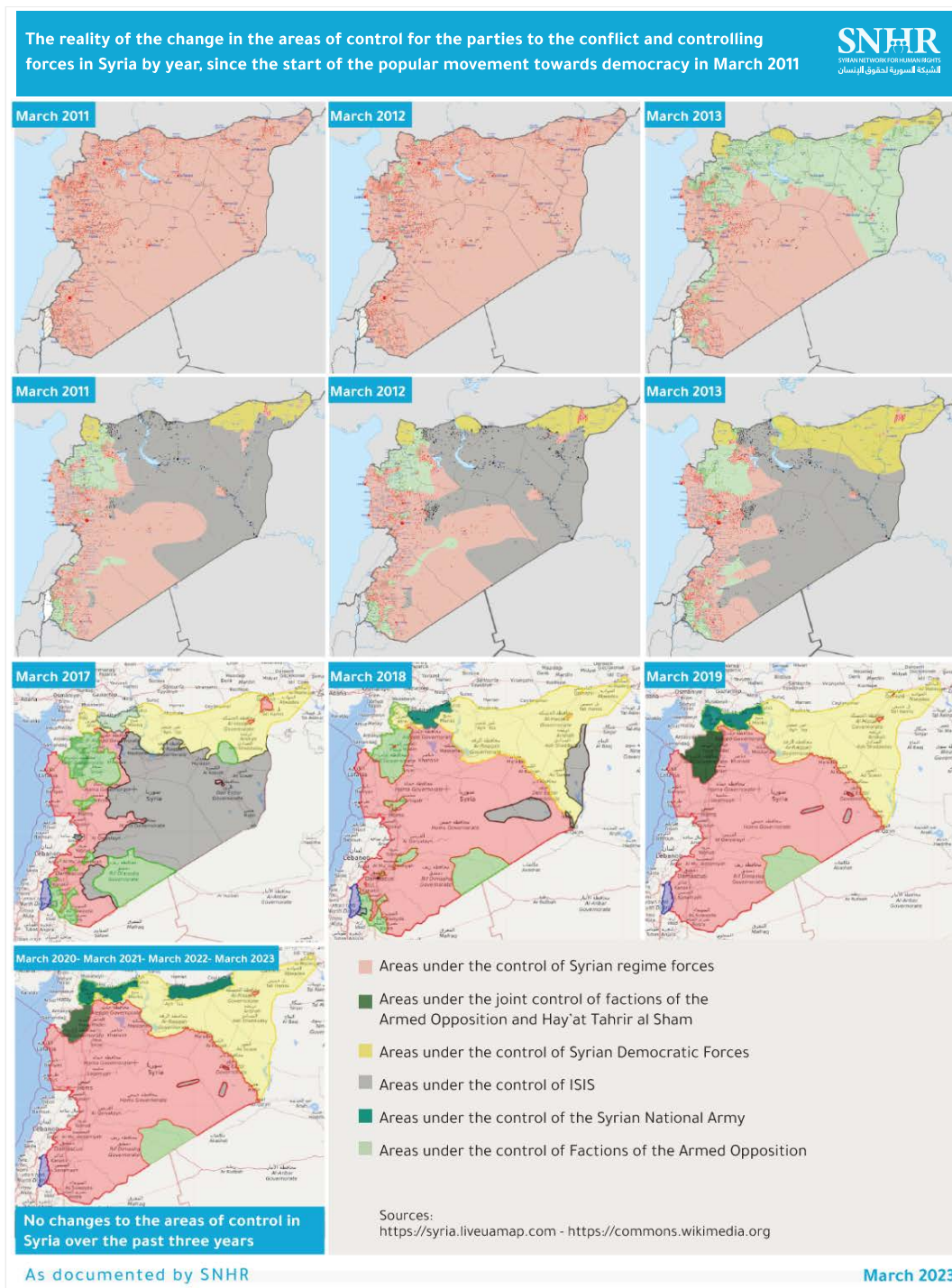
Every year, [SNHR releases an annual report marking the date when the popular uprising broke out. This is our 12th such annual report](#). To avoid a mundane repetition of the events that shaped the internal armed conflict, its developments, and the international community's failure up to this point to bring about a resolution, the focus of this report will be a reminder of the immense humanitarian cost that Syrians have paid and continue to pay in their quest for freedom, democracy, and a state of law. We will include an update of the figures on the most notable violations against the Syrian people and the Syrian state, as recorded on SNHR's database, as well as summarizing some violations other than the ones we document based on statements by the UN, and reputable international organizations in an effort to draw a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the severity of the disaster befalling Syrians, just to emphasize and underscore the fact that violations against Syrians have never stopped since 2011, and that the international community, most importantly the Security Council, has failed miserably in its efforts to bring about a resolution to the Syrian conflict that would ensure a democratic political transition, create the proper conditions for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and lead to the lifting of sanctions as the essential prelude for establishing security and stability.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, says:

The 12th anniversary of the popular uprising against the Syrian regime is a sobering reminder of the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people and of how terribly long this conflict has lasted in light of the international community's and the UN Security Council's failure or unwillingness to find a resolution. The Syrian people have been left alone facing one of the most ruthless authoritarian regimes on the planet, and others engaged in the armed conflict. The political process has been in deadlock for long years. Finding a resolution to the Syrian disaster is surely overdue. However, this cannot come about without holding accountable the Syrian regime, as the main party responsible for the disheartening state that Syria and the Syrians have reached, with over half the Syrian people living in agony and in displacement.

II. Large Changes in Territory in line With Military Developments, and Air Power are the Primary Cause of Killings, Destruction, and Displacement

Syria's regions have seen both gradual and rapid, major changes of control over the past 12 years in line with military developments, and as the popular uprising for democracy in Syria has metamorphosed into an internal armed conflict involving multiple parties. However, the rate of military operations has fallen since the [Idlib Cessation of Hostilities Agreement](#)¹ came into force on March 6, 2020, with the subsequent changes in territorial control accordingly minimalized relative to the previous years. The maps below show how territorial control has changed among the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011.

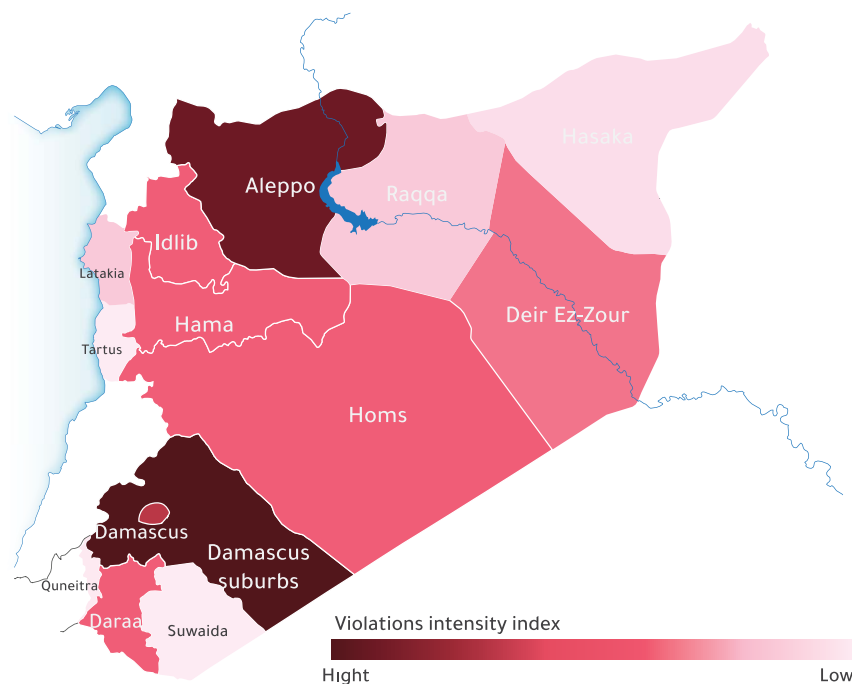


1. This agreement was reached during a meeting between the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on March 5, 2020.

While the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces have all committed human rights violations in their quest to gain or maintain military control of certain areas, the Syrian regime and its allies have committed far more violations than any other party by a vast margin. The Syrian regime has perpetrated killings and arrests since the very first days of the popular uprisings, with many of these crimes qualifying as crimes against humanity according to [dozens of reports by the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic \(COI\)](#).

To give a sense of the magnitude and sheer quantity of the violations to which the Syrian people have been subjected in light of the military developments on the ground, we have designed a map that provides a rough indication of the extent and volume of the most notable human rights violations taking place in all the Syrian governorates. Those maps draw upon SNHR's archives, and our database on the most notable violations of human rights, but primarily on other SNHR databases, including one on the extrajudicial killings of civilians, and another on arrests/enforced disappearances which helps us to categorize victims according to the location where the incident took place and the place of origin for the victim, as well as our database on the use of the most prominent internationally prohibited weapons (chemical weapons, cluster munitions, and barrel bombs). It should be noted, however, that this data was collected in accordance with our methodology which focuses on the place where the incident took place, i.e., the governorate where the killing, arrest, or attack involving the use of prohibited weapons took place, regardless of victims' governorate of origin. Finally, it must be noted that the data we have been able to document only reflect the bare minimum of information in light of the sheer magnitude and volume of the violations, as well as how widespread they were, not to mention the challenges we face in our documentation efforts, which are summarized in our methodology.

Map showing the magnitude and volume of the most notable violations of human rights at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and March 2023



Military air power, solely possessed by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces and international coalition forces, as well as the platforms used by the Syrian regime and its allies to fire rockets, bombs, and barrel bombs, have played the largest role in changing the reality of territorial control on the ground in Syria. Naturally, these factors also caused the greatest proportion of violations, including killings, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure. According to SNHR's database, ariel bombardment has caused 70-75 percent of all killings, destruction and subsequent displacement in Syria.

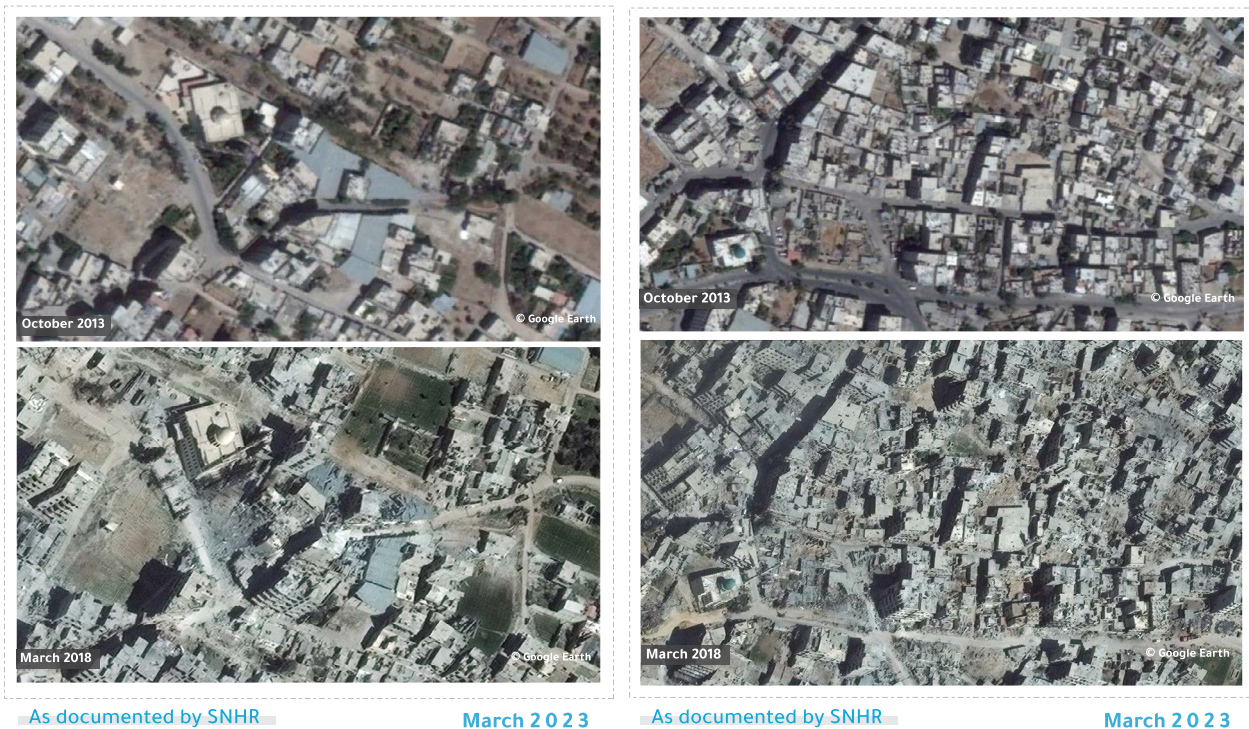
To further illustrate this point, we, at SNHR, have selected a number of areas as examples based on a set of criteria that include:

- The examples selected are located in the three governorates that saw the highest frequency of bombardment according to the indicators of the magnitude of violations shown above.
- The examples selected are areas where the Syrian regime took control. This is because:
 1. The Syrian regime is the party currently controlling the largest percentage of territory in Syria, having recaptured control over 65 percent of the country since March 2020 (the distribution of territorial control has been almost completely unchanged since that time).
 2. The Syrian regime far exceeds all other parties in terms of the number of violations perpetrated, being responsible for approximately 88 percent of all the violations that we have documented.
- The examples have been selected from areas that were targeted in aerial bombardment only by the Syrian regime and its ally Russia.

We have obtained at least two satellite photos for each example in order to show a 'before and after' comparison between two points in time, in the same area. The areas used as examples have been recaptured by the Syrian regime, which is, therefore, wholly responsible, along with its allies, for the destruction in the area during the period between its losing then regaining control over said area. Below are four examples selected from the three governorates that have seen the highest frequency of human rights violations we have been able to document between March 2011 and March 2023.

Damascus suburbs governorate

Satellite photos showing the destruction in Misraba town resulting from Syrian-Russian attacks between October 2013 and March 2018



Two satellite photos showing the destruction in al-Shefouniya town resulting from Syrian-Russian attacks between October 2013 and March 2018



As documented by SNHR

March 2023

Aleppo governorate

Two satellite photos showing the destruction in al-Sha'ar neighborhood in eastern Aleppo city, resulting from Syrian-Russian attacks between 2012 and 2016



As documented by SNHR

March 2023

Damascus governorate

Two satellite photos showing the destruction in al-Qaboun neighborhood in eastern Damascus city resulting from Syrian-Russian attacks between 2012 and 2017



As documented by SNHR

March 2023

III. Detailed Account of the Most Notable Violations in Syria in the Last 12 Years as Documented on SNHR's Database

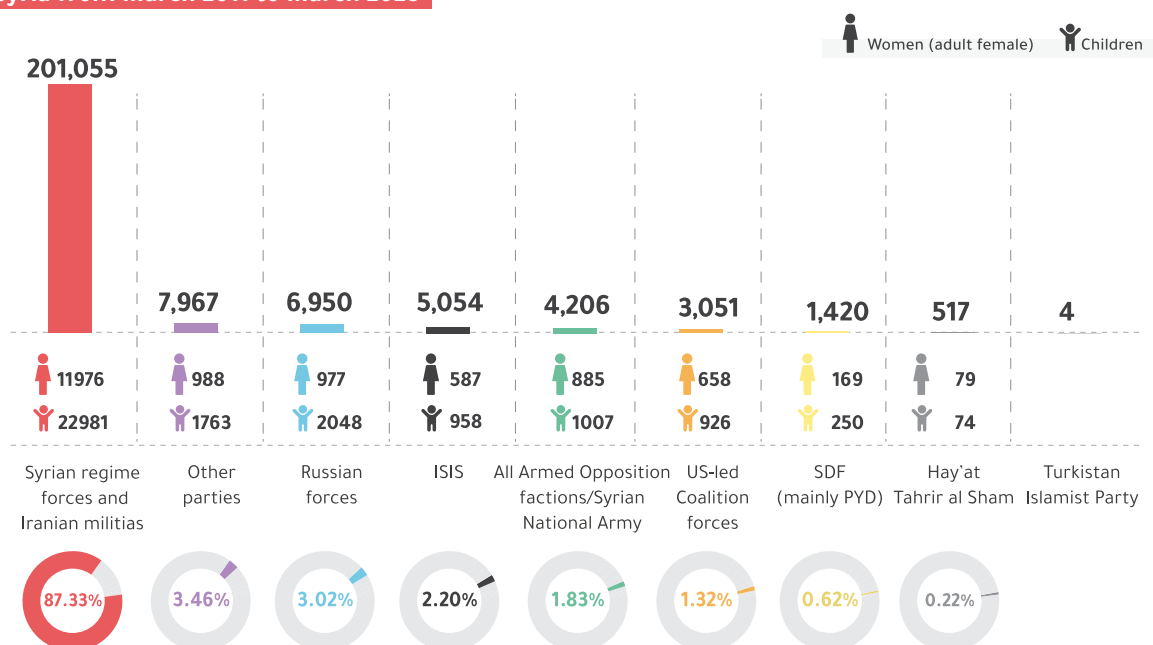
A. Extrajudicial killings: 230,224 civilians documented as dead, including 30,007 children and 16,319 women.

Even today, Syria remains one of the world's most dangerous countries for civilians. For the last 12 years and up to the present day, extrajudicial killings have not stopped at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in the country.

SNHR has documented the killing of 230,224 civilians, including 30,007 children and 16,319 women (adult female) at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling force in Syria between March 2011 and March 2023, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:**² 201,055 civilians, including 22,981 children and 11,976 women.
- **Russian forces:** 6,950 civilians, including 2,048 children and 977 women.
- **ISIS:** 5,054 civilians, including 958 children and 587 women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):**³ 517 civilians, including 74 children and 79 women.
- **Turkistan Islamic Party:** four civilians.
- **All armed opposition factions**⁴/**Syrian National Army (SNA):** 4,206 civilians, including 1,007 children and 885 women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):** 1,420 civilians, including 250 children and 169 women.
- **International coalition forces:** 3,051 civilians, including 926 children and 658 women.
- **Other parties:** 7,967 civilians, including 1,763 children and 988 women.

The death of 230,224 civilians at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 to March 2023



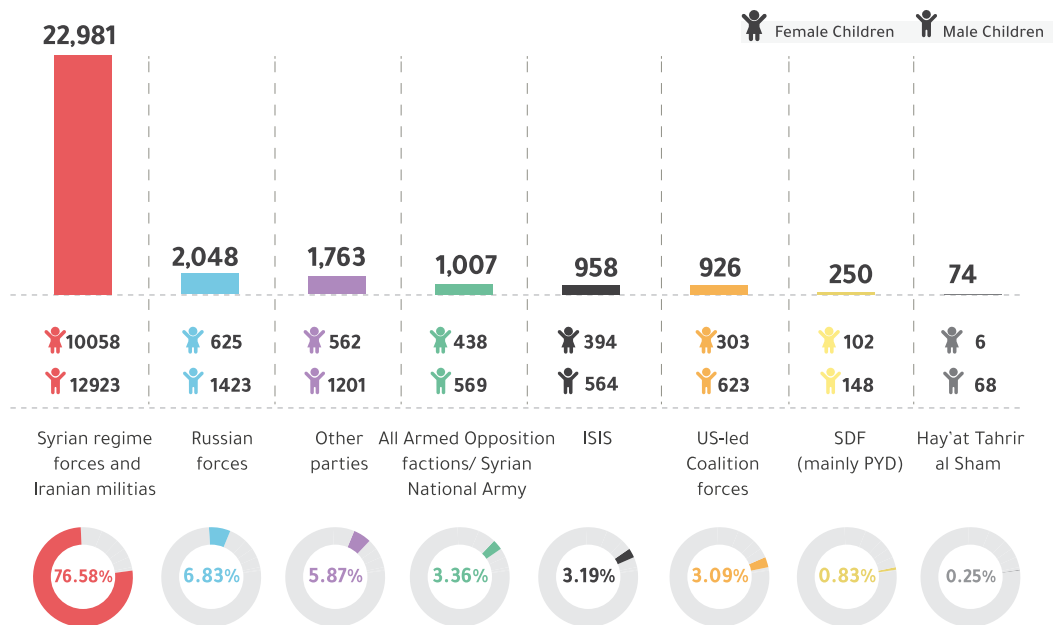
2. We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the security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

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

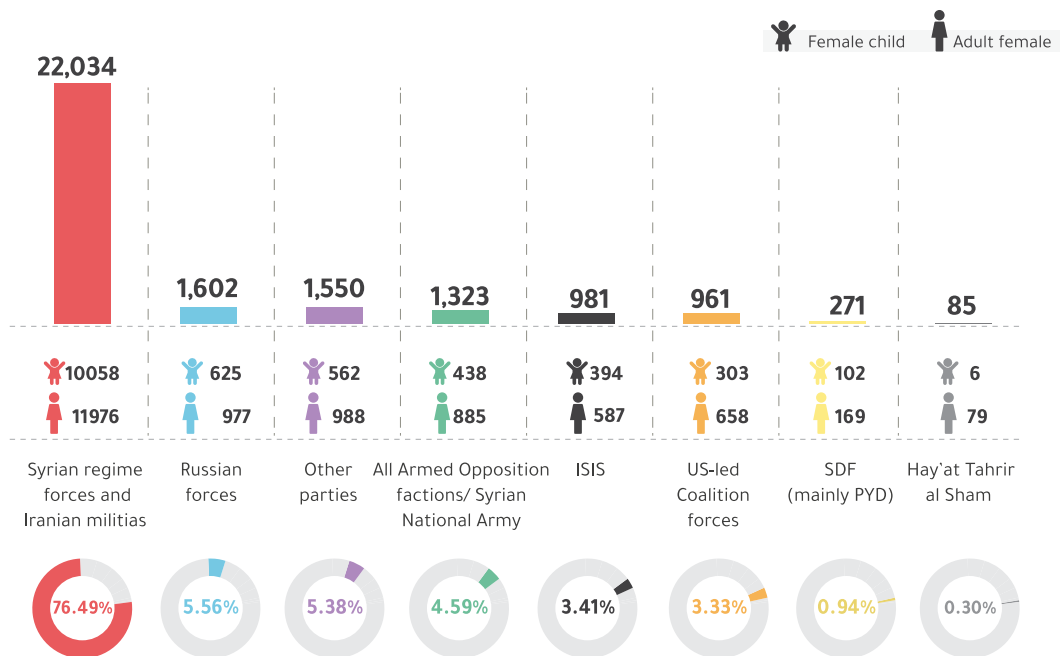
3. Was designated as a terrorist group by the UN.

4. The various armed opposition /SNA factions that emerged in Syria since 2011 in all areas they controlled.

The death of **30,007** children at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 to March 2023

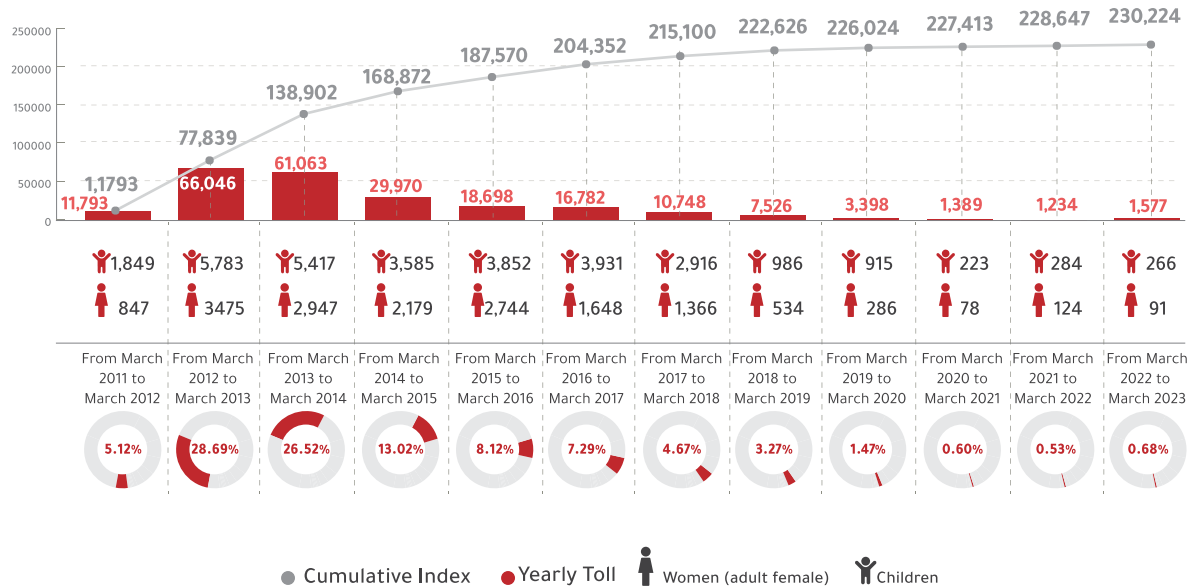


The death of **28,807** females at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 to March 2023



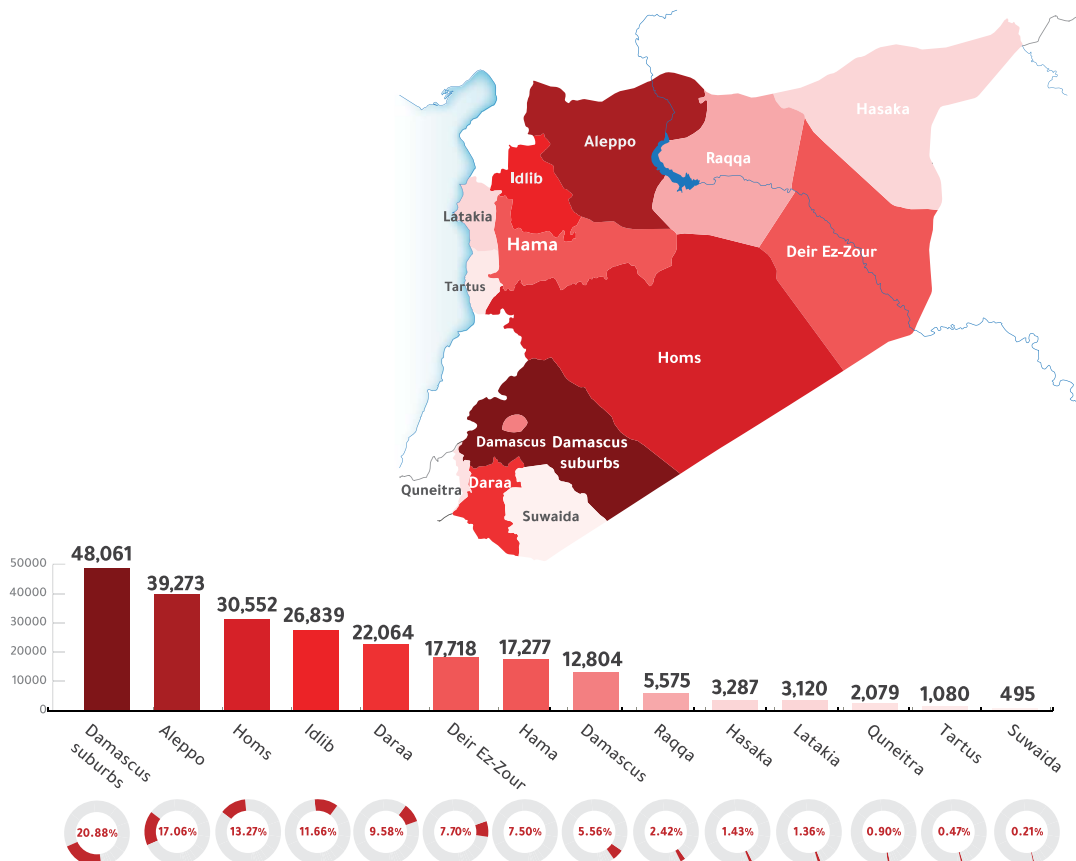
As shown by the graphs above, Syrian regime forces and their allies far exceed all other parties to the conflict, individually or collectively, in terms of extrajudicial killings by a vast margin, with roughly 91 percent of all victims being killed at the hands of Syrian-Russian-Iranian forces. Three percent of this total have been killed by Russian forces since the launch of their military intervention in September 2015.

Civilian victims killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces over the past 12 years are distributed by year as follows:



Analyzing the data above shows that the uprising's second year (from March 2012 until March 2013) saw the highest percentage of civilian deaths, followed by the third year (from March 2013 until March 2014) with approximately 29 percent and 27 percent of all civilian deaths documented to date occurring in those two years respectively. In other words, approximately 56 percent of all civilian deaths documented since March 2011 took place between March 2012 and March 2014.

The civilian deaths that we have documented since March 2011 are distributed across governorates as follows:



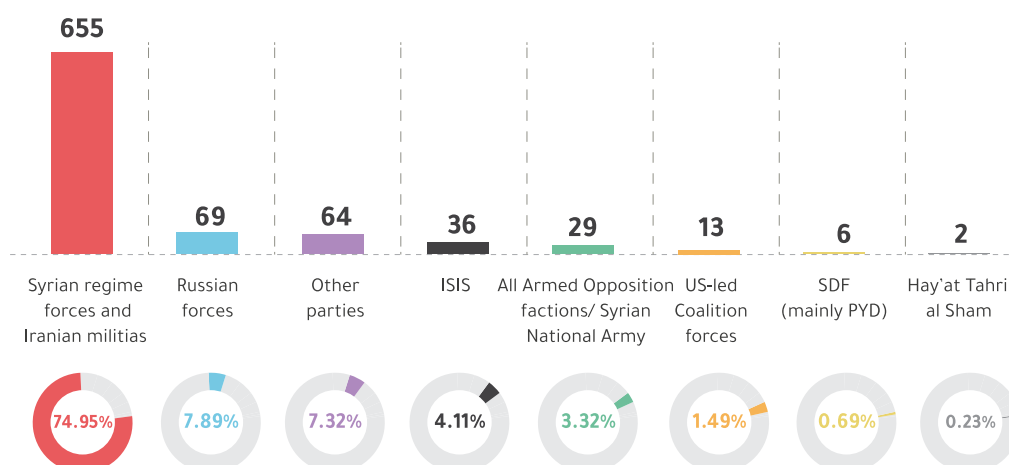
As shown by the civilian death distribution across governorate, all Syrian governorates have seen civilian deaths over the past 12 years, with the governorates of Damascus suburbs, Aleppo, and Homs suffering the largest number, sitting at roughly 52 percent of all civilian deaths occurring in those governorates. This percentage can be broken down as follows: 21 percent in Damascus suburbs governorate, 17 percent in Aleppo governorate, and 14 percent in Homs governorate.

Deaths among medical personnel

SNHR documented the killing of 874 medical personnel by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and March 2023, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 655 medical personnel.
- **Russian forces:** 69 medical personnel.
- **ISIS:** 36 medical personnel.
- **HTS:** Two medical personnel.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** 29 medical personnel.
- **SDF:** Six medical personnel.
- **International coalition forces:** 13 medical personnel.
- **Other parties:** 64 medical personnel.

The death of 874 medical workers at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces, from March 2011 to March 2023:



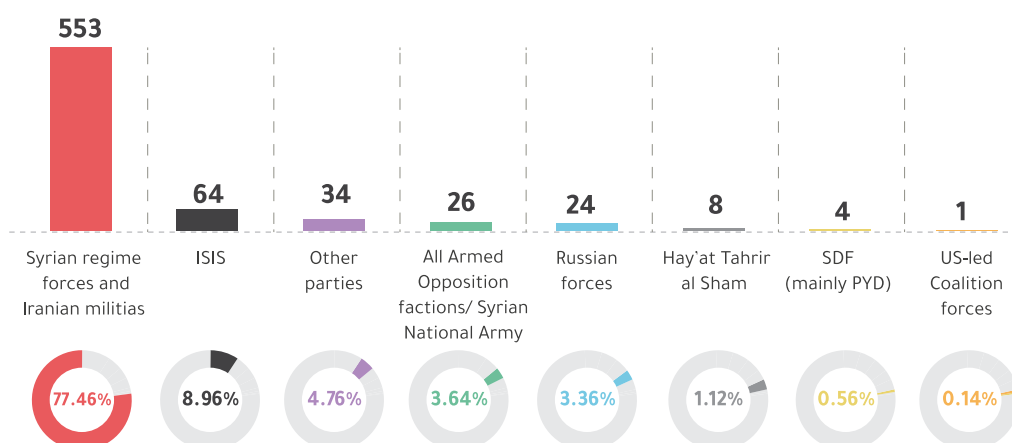
As shown by the graph above, approximately 83 percent of all medical personnel killed since March 2011 have been killed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces. It should be noted that some of these medical personnel were killed in attacks on medical facilities, or while they were tending to the wounded. This high death toll explicitly suggests that the Syrian-Russian alliance forces have deliberately targeted medical personnel and medical facilities and aimed to destroy them.

Deaths among media workers

SNHR has documented the killing of 714 media workers by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and March 2023, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 553 media workers.
- **Russian forces:** 24 media workers.
- **ISIS:** 64 media workers.
- **HTS:** Eight media workers.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** 26 media workers.
- **SDF:** Four media workers.
- **International coalition forces:** One media worker.
- **Other parties:** 34 media workers.

The death of 714 media workers at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces, from March 2011 to March 2023:



Analysis of the data above shows that Syrian-Russian alliance forces have killed roughly 82 percent of all media workers documented killed since March 2011; the Syrian regime has killed approximately 78 percent of the total, while Russian forces have been responsible for four percent of all deaths among media workers.

B. No fewer than 154,817 arbitrarily arrested detainees/forcibly disappeared persons

Arbitrary arrest was one of the first violations to be committed in the Syrian regime in the context of the popular uprising since it began in March 2011, targeting those calling for political reform, liberty, and dignity. The arrests carried out have been widespread with no distinction made between age groups, sex, or political and religious affiliations. As the protests expanded across the various Syrian governorates, arrests rose steadily as a way to terrorize the demonstrators and deter other Syrians from joining the popular uprising movement. In reality, these 'arrests' are more like abduction in their overwhelming majority of cases (as high as 90 percent). The Syrian regime has spared no resources of its vast security apparatus machinery deploying tens of thousands of members to carry out raids and arrests. The detainees seized in these arrests are subjected to torture from the very first moment of their detention. They are denied any opportunity to contact their families or lawyers, with the regime authorities in most cases even denying holding the detainee; as a result, detainees become forcibly disappeared persons.

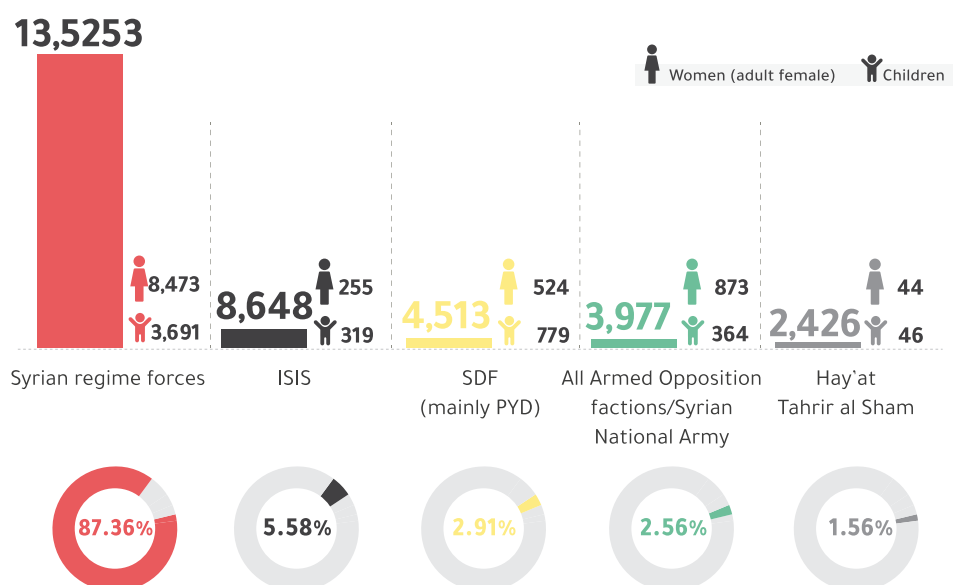
As time went on, new parties emerged in the conflict, some of which managed to take control of some areas in Syria. All these parties have practiced the same repressive strategies as the regime towards any dissenting or critical voices in the territories under their control. While the rate of military operations and the resulting killings and destruction has fallen since the beginning of 2020, all parties to the conflict still employ the same policies of arbitrary arrest/detention and enforced disappearance. At present, approximately 154,000 Syrian citizens are still detained or forcibly disappeared with no signs indicating that any party to the conflict might be willing to reveal the fate of those detainees despite the calls made on the international stage.

It should be noted that these figures are solely the cases that we have been able to document in accordance with our rigorous [methodology](#). In most cases, the arrest method used is more similar to an abduction than to any legitimate arrest procedure, with the party responsible seizing their victims without revealing their own identities or showing any judicial warrant. Another feature of these 'arrests' that makes them more akin to kidnappings or abductions than legitimate detentions is that the parties responsible subsequently deny responsibility for them, with the overwhelming majority of arrests going on to become enforced disappearances.

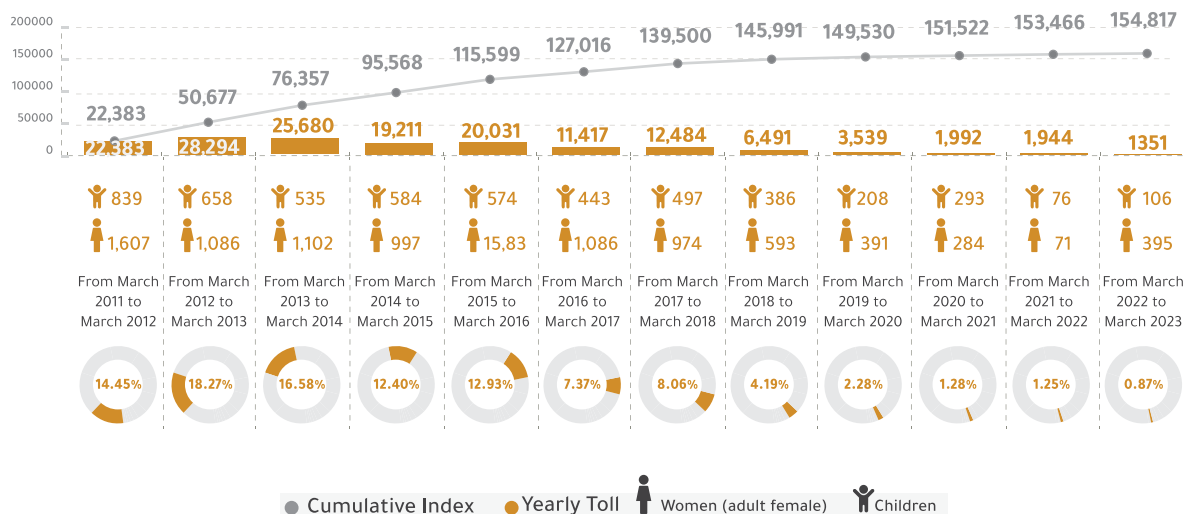
SNHR has documented that no fewer than 154,817 of the individuals arrested by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces between March 2011 and March 2013, including 5,199 children and 10,169 women (adult female), are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared by these parties and controlling forces. These are distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 135,253 individuals, including 3,691 children and 8,473 women.
- **ISIS:** 8,648 individuals, including 319 children and 255 women.
- **HTS:** 2,426 individuals, including 46 children and 44 women.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** 3,977 individuals, including 364 children and 873 women.
- **SDF:** 4,513 individuals, including 779 children and 524 women.

At least 154,817 individuals, including 5,199 children and 10,169 women (adult females), are still detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 to March 2023

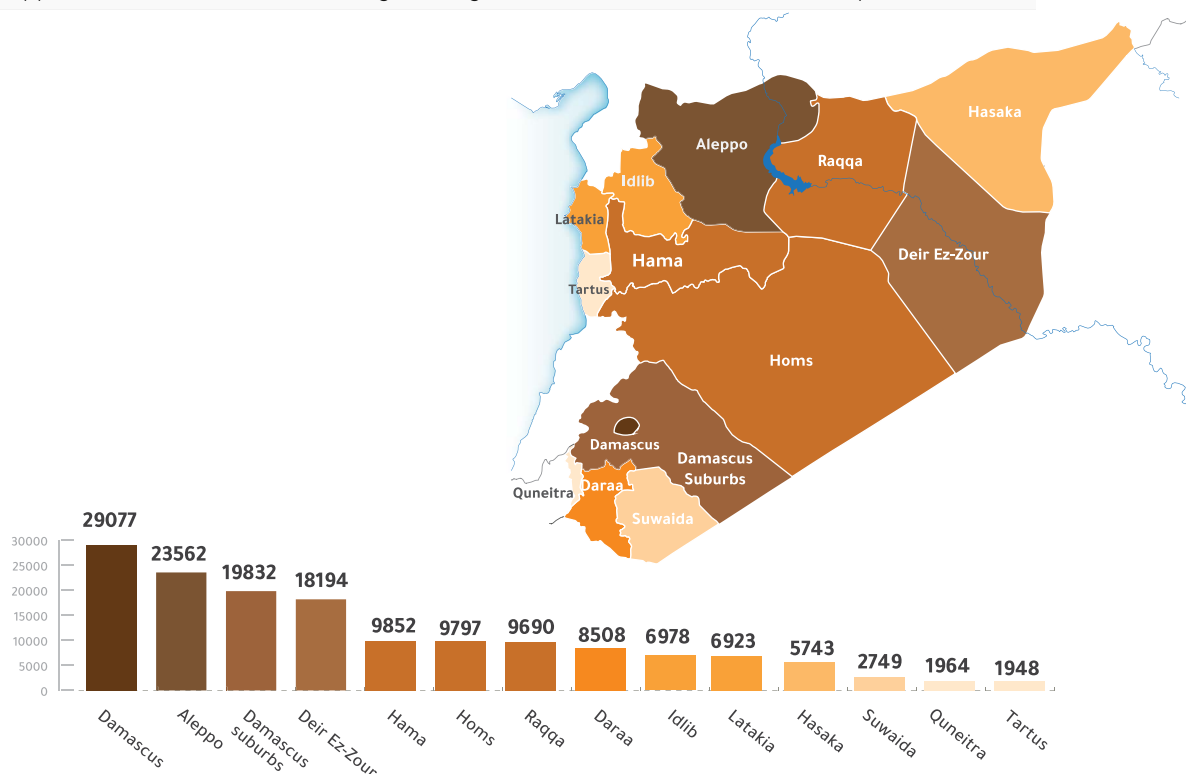


The number of people detained/forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces over the last 12 years is distributed as follows:



The first three years of the popular uprising saw the highest percentage of arrests of those individuals who are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared, with roughly 50 percent. This is due to the high frequency of protests and their wide geographical scope during that period. The rate of arrests reached its highest levels in the uprising's second year (from March 2012 until March 2013), accounting for 19 percent of the total.

The numbers of individuals arrested between March 2011 and March 2023, who are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared are distributed according to the governorate where the arrests took place as follows:



As shown by the graph above, the largest number of arrests of individuals still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared took place in Damascus city, which accounts for 18 percent of all cases, followed by Aleppo governorate with 15 percent, then Damascus suburbs governorate with 12 percent, and Deir Ez-Zour with 11 percent.

C. Torture: No fewer than 15,272 deaths due to torture documented, including 197 children and 113 women.

Torture, a practice prohibited in the strictest and strongest terms by international law, is still being practiced in Syria in the same systematic manner and frequency since March 2011. Naturally, torture is used against political and military opponents by the parties to the conflict, or against the ruled societies by the controlling forces, in order to assert their control and silence any demands for freedom, human rights or democracy. It should be noted that, in Syria, the very act of arresting someone is a form of torture since it is a violent act carried out with no judicial warrant, which is a common practice by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces, with SNHR detailing the other patterns of torture used by all parties in our annual reports released to mark [the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on June 26 every year](#). It is safe to say that the one of the cruelest aspects of torture in Syria is its ubiquitousness, meaning that it is difficult to estimate how much torture is being practiced, or to exclusively accuse a certain individual or party of practicing torture. Indeed, the practice of torture by all parties and controlling forces is an open secret in Syria. Torture does not stop at any point of a detainee's imprisonment, which may last for years. Any officer can torture whichever detainee they wish at any time. Moreover, detention conditions are usually extremely poor and marked by extreme medical negligence, which is, in and of itself, a form of torture. Even worse, the overwhelming majority of detainees go on to become forcibly disappeared persons, which is also, in and of itself, one of the cruelest forms of torture, whereby a detainee is cut off from the outside world, including family, friends, or any legal representation, causing immense psychological trauma throughout the enforced disappearance period.

While all parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria have practiced torture against their opponents, the Syrian regime is by far the most prolific, deadliest and most dangerous practitioner of torture for the following reasons:

1. The Syrian regime holds the largest number of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons
2. The Syrian regime is the party that practices torture in the most systematic and widespread manner in relation to the other parties to the conflict, with torture being a methodical, pervasive policy at regime detention centers adopted by the various regime security apparatuses, all of which use similar methods, rather than being an isolated or uncommon practice.

This confirms that all of those agencies are tied to a one centralized decision-making framework. Indeed, the Syrian regime's practice of torture qualifies as crimes against humanity, with every detainee subjected to one or more forms of torture. It is estimated that the Syrian regime has arrested and released approximately 1.2 million Syrian citizens since 2011 alone. Moreover, the regime is responsible for by far the highest number of deaths due to torture, which is a natural outcome of the facts that:

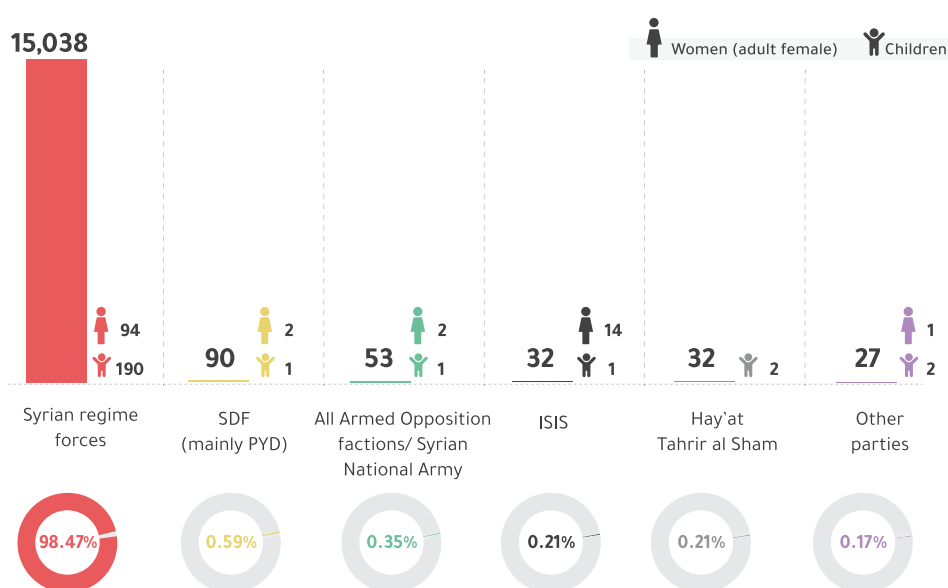
1. The Syrian regime has arrested an extremely large number of individuals, most of whom have gone on to become forcibly disappeared persons, and
2. The regime runs a large number of detention centers that operate outside any form or method of supervision of any human rights groups. We have outlined in a [detailed report](#) the most prominent methods of torture used by Syrian regime forces in their detention centers and military hospitals, documenting 72 methods of physical, psychological, and sexual torture used in these facilities.

Despite being by far the most prolific practitioner of torture in Syria, however, the Syrian regime is not the only party in the country using torture, with SNHR also monitoring and documenting the torture methods used by the other parties. We have provided details of some of the torture methods used by [ISIS](#) and [HTS](#) in two extensive reports released in 2022.

SNHR has documented the deaths of 15,272 individuals due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and March 2023, with the victims including 197 children and 113 women (adult female). These cases are distributed as follows:

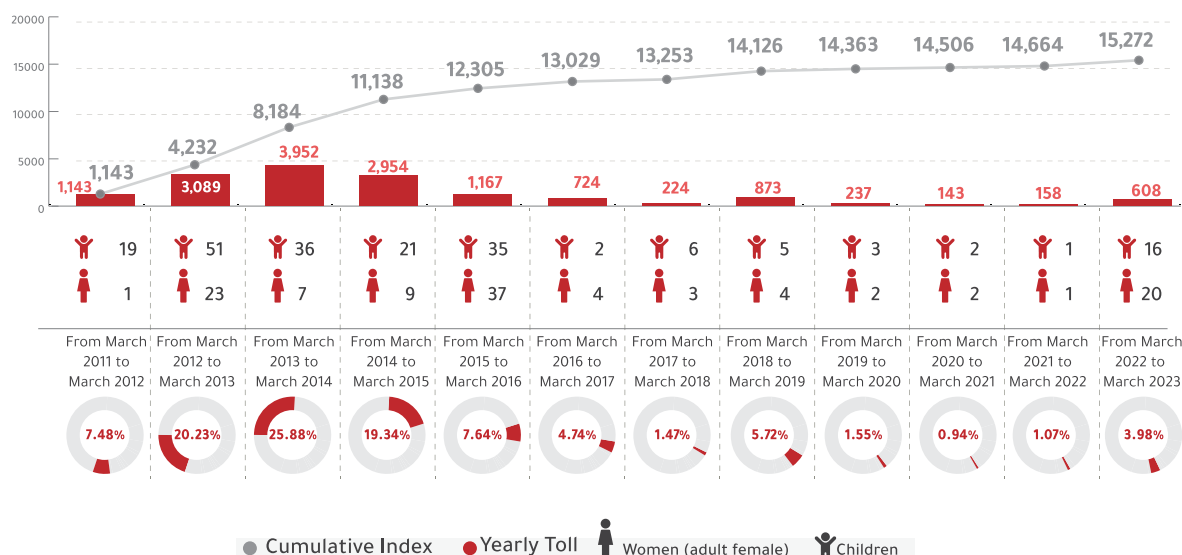
- **Syrian regime forces:** 15,038 individuals, including 190 children and 94 women.
- **ISIS:** 32 individuals, including one child and 14 women.
- **HTS:** 32 individuals, including two children.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** 53 individuals, including one child and two women.
- **SDF:** 90 individuals, including one child and two women.
- **Other parties:** 27 individuals, including two children and one woman.

The death of 15,272 individuals, including 197 children and 113 women due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 to March 2023

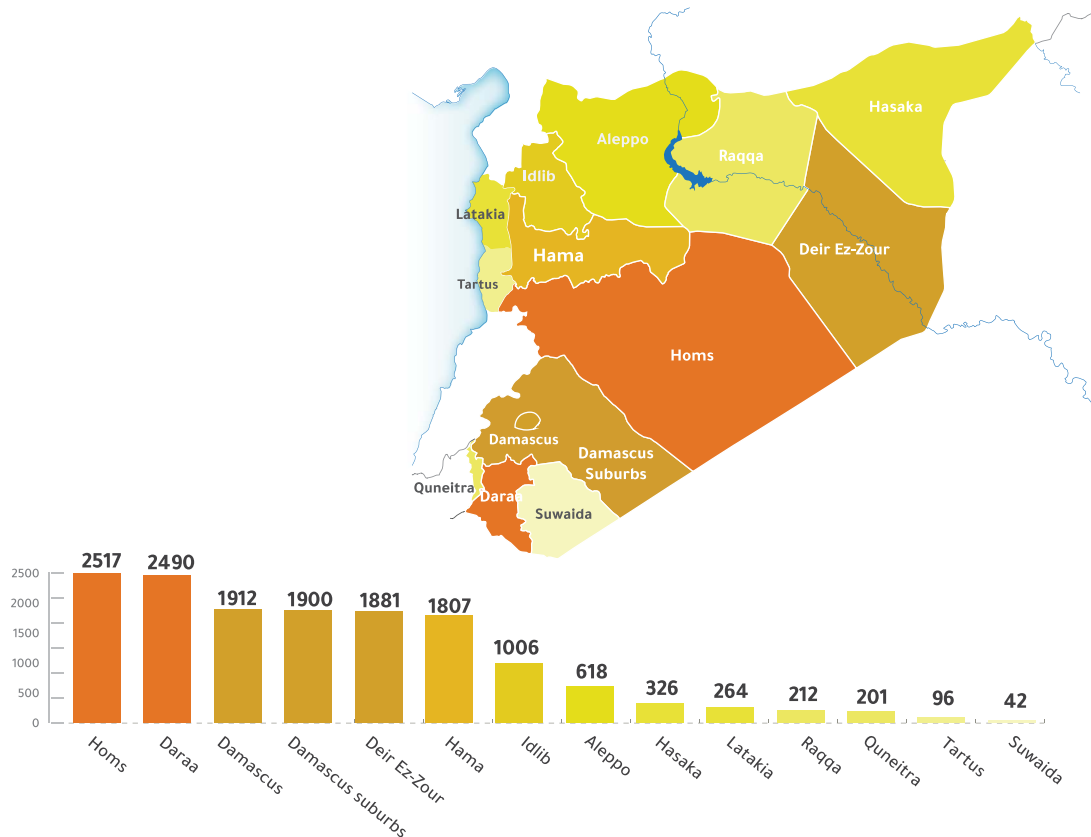


The Syrian regime has far surpassed all other parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, individually or collectively, in terms of the methods of torture used at its detention centers and the resulting deaths due to torture. In fact, the Syrian regime is responsible for 99 percent of all the deaths due to torture we have documented.

The distribution of deaths due to torture (no fewer than 15,272 deaths) between March 2011 and March 2023 are distributed across governorates as follows:



The distribution of deaths due to torture (no fewer than 15,272 deaths) between March 2011 and March 2023 are distributed across governorates as follows:



The map above shows that the largest proportion of the victims who died due to torture were from Daraa governorate, followed by Homs, then Damascus, with 17 percent, 16 percent, and 12 percent of all victims originating from those three governorates respectively. We have also monitored that the Syrian regime practices torture against specific detainees based solely on their coming from a certain area known for anti-regime activism as a form of collective punishment.

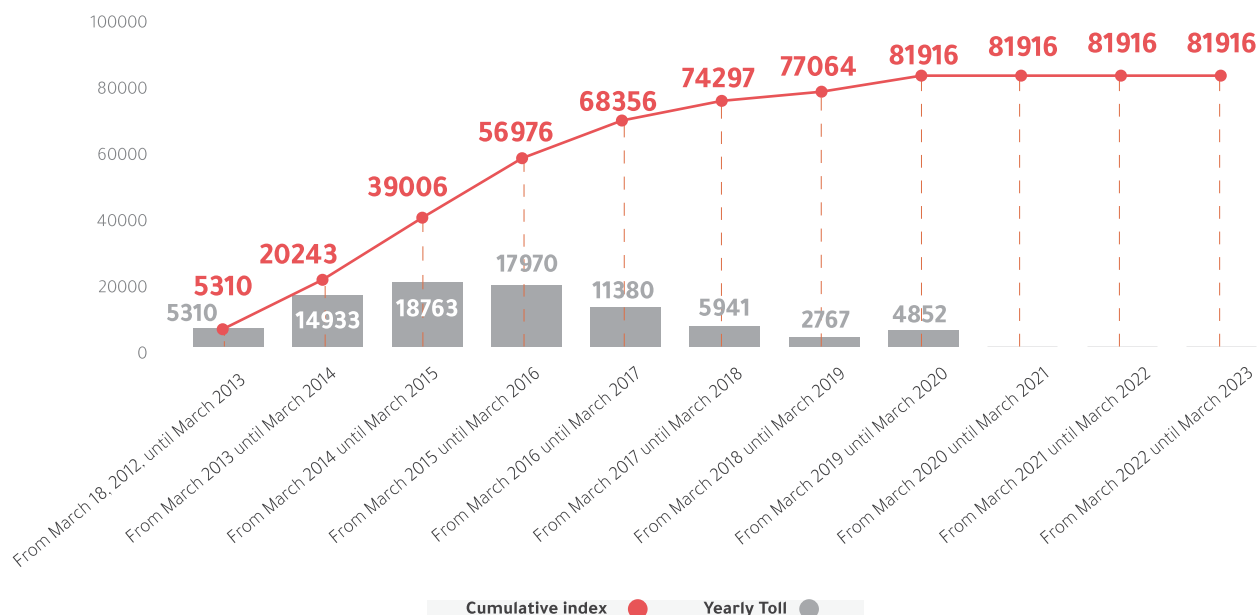
D. Detailed account of the use of four types of weapons: barrel bombs, chemical weapons, cluster munitions, and incendiary weapons

1. Barrel bombs: No fewer than 81,916 barrel bombs have been dropped by the Syrian regime on Syria

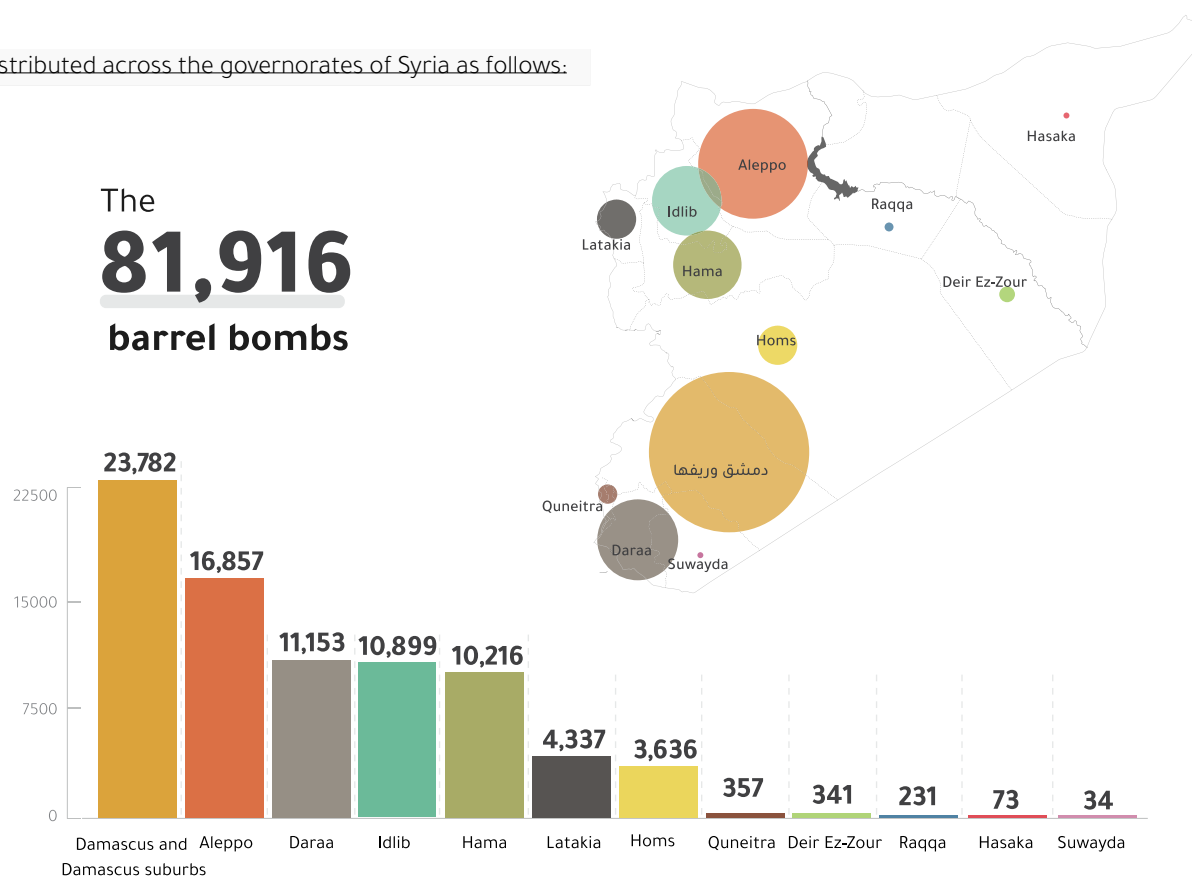
Barrel bombs have been one of the most widely used improvised weapons deployed by the Syrian regime in its war against the Syrian people in the wake of the popular uprising that began in March 2011. This can be partially explained by the fact that barrel bombs are the cheapest of all the weapons used by the Syrian regime air force, being both massively destructive and extremely indiscriminate since they are dropped to fall freely. Through our daily monitoring, we noticed that the Syrian regime used barrel bombs as a tactic in the course of concentrated offensives against the territories controlled by other parties to the conflict in order to take control of these areas. According to SNHR's database, [the first documented use of barrel bombs](#) dates back to July 18, 2012, in [Dael city](#), northern Daraa governorate. [We have released monthly](#) and [special reports](#) outlining the Syrian regime's use of barrel bombs and the resultant civilian death toll from barrel bombs attacks. In our most recent detailed report on the subject, released in April 2021, we provided details of the stages of manufacturing barrel bombs and the sites of the most prominent barrel bomb-manufacturing facilities. We have also documented the Syrian regime's adding chemical substances and incendiary materials to the content of barrel bombs to increase their lethality.

SNHR has documented that the Syrian regime's helicopters and fixed-wing warplanes dropped roughly 81,916 barrel bombs between July 2012 and March 2023, resulting in the deaths of 11,087 civilians, including 1,821 children and 1,780 women (adult female).

The toll of barrel bombs use is distributed by year as follows:



distributed across the governorates of Syria as follows:



As shown on the graphs above, Damascus and Damascus suburbs governorates saw the highest percentage of barrel bombs used, accounting for approximately 29 percent of the total, followed by Aleppo with approximately 21 percent, Daraa with approximately 14 percent, and finally Idlib with approximately 13 percent.

Analysis of the data shows also that 45 percent of all barrel bombs were dropped between March 2014 and March 2016, with 2014 and 2016 seeing the highest and second-highest numbers respectively. In greater detail, approximately 23 percent of all barrel bombs were dropped between March 2014 and March 2015, and approximately 22 percent of all barrel bombs were dropped between March 2015 and March 2016.

2. Chemical weapons: 222 chemical attacks documented

The constant culture of impunity has emboldened the Syrian regime to continue perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes, which involved the regime using an extensive array of weapons against the Syrian people, including weapons of mass destruction, specifically chemical weapons. Particularly in the case of chemical weapons, the impunity enjoyed by the Syrian regime has meant that the regime is willing to use this weapon repeatedly and in a widespread manner, despite the UN Security Council's adoption of three resolutions - 2118,⁵ 2209,⁶ and 2235⁷ - on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

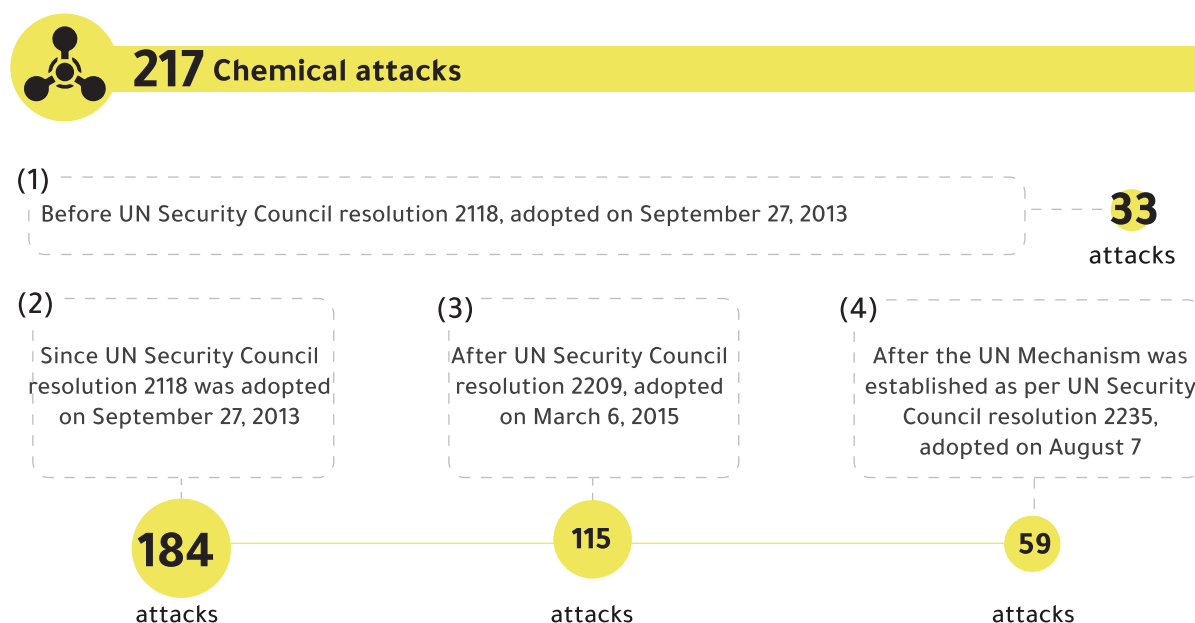
According to SNHR's chemical weapons database, the Syrian regime's first documented attack involving the use of chemical weapons took place in al-Bayyada neighborhood in Homs city on December 23, 2012. As of March 2023, we have documented no fewer than 222 chemical weapons attacks in Syria, distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

A. The Syrian regime carried out 217 attacks involving the use of chemical weapons across Syria.

B. ISIS carried out five chemical attacks in Aleppo governorate.

The attacks are distributed by the resolutions of the Security Council on the use of chemical weapons in Syria as follows:

A. The Syrian regime carried out 217 attacks, distributed as follows:



5. United Nations Security Council, resolution 2118/2013 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2118\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2118(2013))

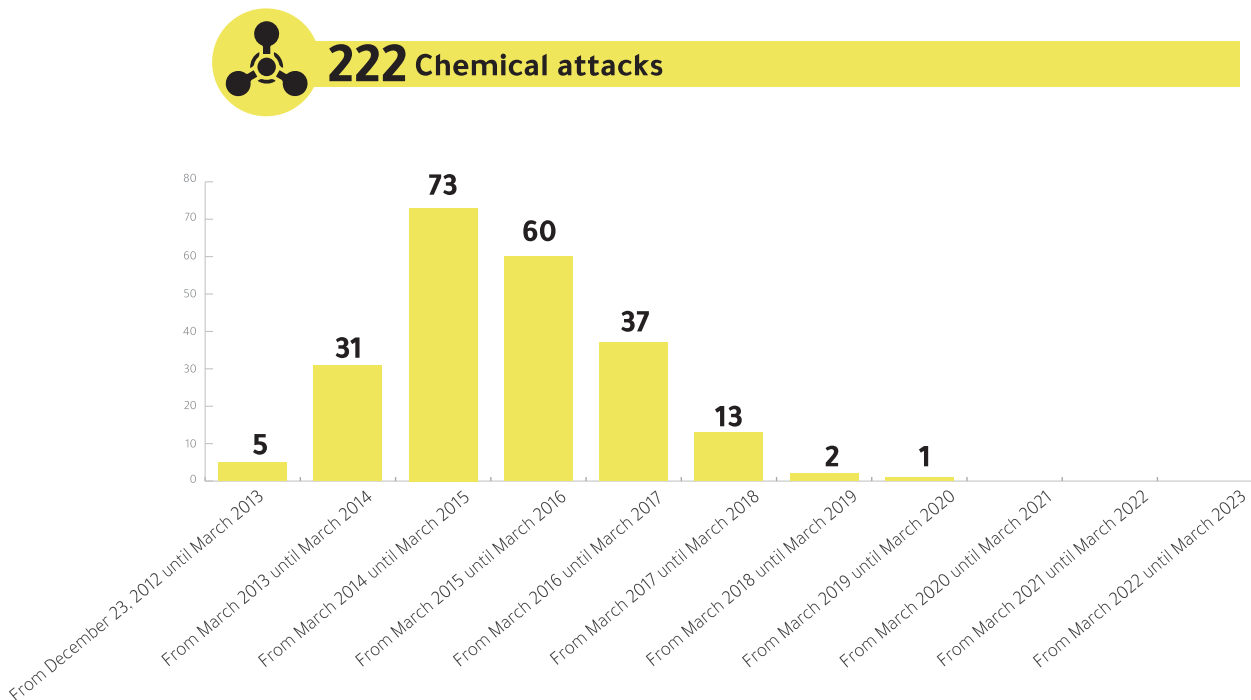
6. United Nations Security Council, resolution 2209/2014 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2209\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2209(2014))

7. United Nations Security Council, resolution 2235/2015 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2235\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2235(2015))

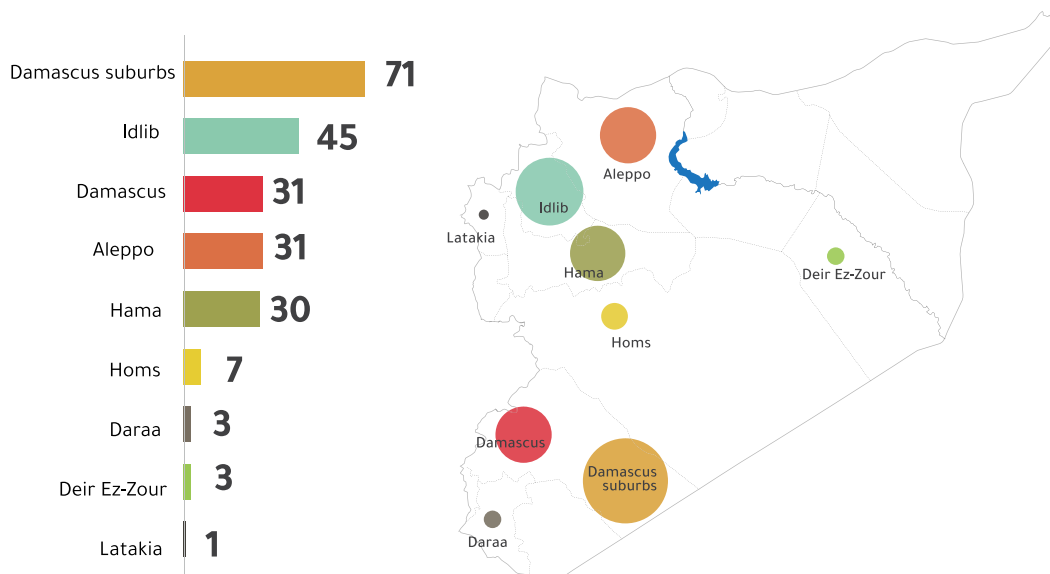
B. ISIS carried out five chemical attacks in Aleppo that violated the three Security Council resolutions: 2118, 2209, and 2235.

In total, the 222 chemical attacks have resulted in the death of 1,510 individuals: 1,409 civilians; including 205 children and 260 women (adult female); 94 armed opposition fighters, and seven captured Syrian regime troops who were being held in an armed opposition prison. All of the victims were killed in attacks carried out by the Syrian regime. Additionally, a total of 11,212 individuals were injured in chemical weapons attacks, including 11,080 individuals injured in attacks carried out by the Syrian regime, while the remaining 132 were injured in attacks carried out by ISIS.

The 222 chemical attacks are distributed by year as follows:



The attacks are distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



As shown in the graphs above, the uprising's fourth, fifth, and sixth year, in that order, saw the majority of chemical weapons attacks that we have been able to document, with approximately 33 percent of all the documented chemical weapons attacks taking place between March 2014 and March 2015, approximately 27 percent of all chemical weapons attacks taking place between March 2015 and March 2016, and approximately 17 percent of all chemical weapons attacks taking place between March 2016 and March 2017.

Analysis of the data also shows that Damascus suburbs governorate saw approximately 32 percent of all the chemical weapons attacks, making it the governorate where most of the chemical weapons attacks took place, followed by Idlib with roughly 21 percent, and then the two governorates of Damascus and Aleppo with roughly 14 percent each.

3. Cluster munitions: 496 attacks documented

For the past 11 years, the Syrian territories have seen heavy and repeated use of cluster munitions, firstly by the Syrian regime, then by Russian forces. Indeed, hundreds of cluster bomb attacks have targeted civilian objects, including agricultural lands or populated areas, and resulted in casualties among Syrian citizens. According to SNHR's database on cluster munitions attacks, the first documented use of cluster munitions dates back to July 10, 2012, when fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes targeted Shurlin village in southwestern Idlib governorate. According to our regular monitoring, the Syrian regime and Russian forces are the only two parties to have used cluster munitions in Syria. We documented a rise in the use of this weapon after Russia launched its military operation in Syria on September 30, 2015. These attacks have been carried using missiles or shells carrying tens/hundreds of submunitions that are either dropped from warplanes or launched from launcher platforms believed to be stationed in the Mediterranean Sea or via rocket launchers.

Cluster munitions are particularly dangerous because of their long-term consequences that last far beyond the period of war or conflict. In addition to the victims killed in the initial cluster munitions attack, around 10-40 percent of cluster munitions do not explode at that time, instead remaining live but dormant until they claim further victims as time passes. We, at SNHR, must stress that at least hundreds of cluster submunitions have effectively turned into live landmines that can kill or maim civilians, and cause serious injuries when touched or even when someone gets close to them.

SNHR has documented no fewer than 496 attacks involving the use of cluster munitions. Those attacks were carried out by Syrian-Russian alliances forces between the first documented use of this type of weapon in July 2012 and March 2023, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 251 attacks.
- **Russian forces:** 237 attacks.
- **Russian/Syrian attacks:** eight attacks.

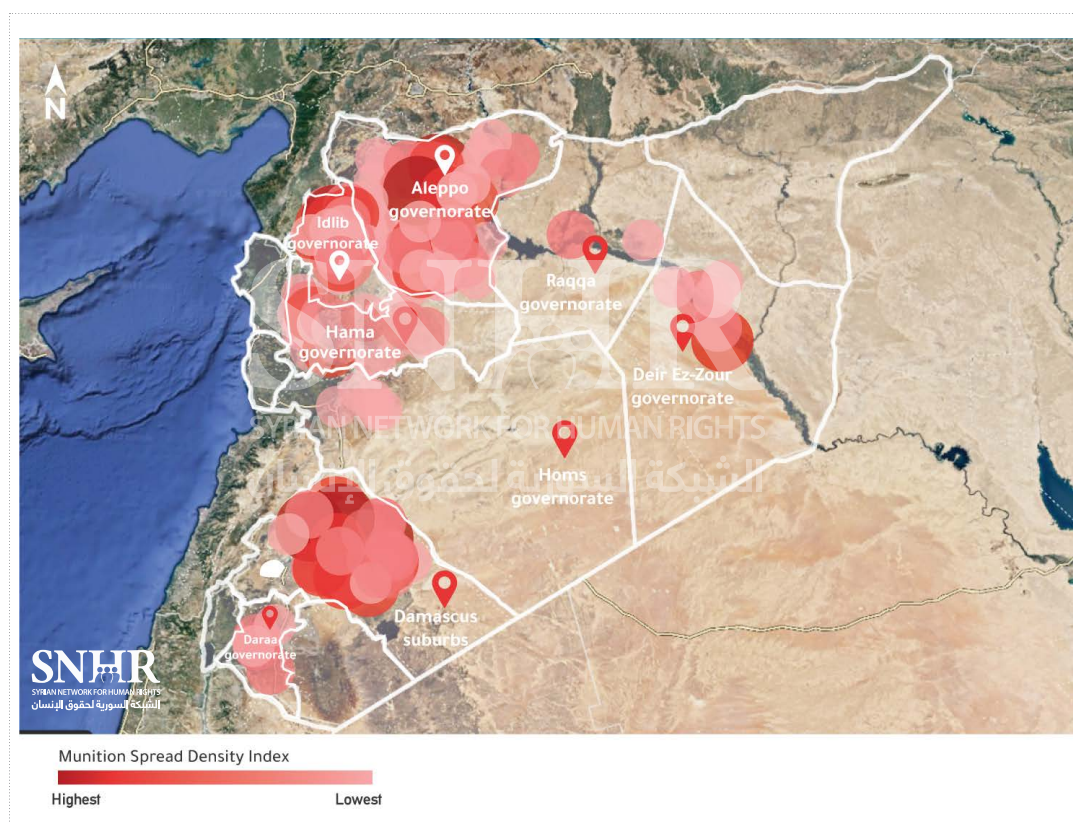
We have recorded the killing of 1,053 civilians, including 394 children and 219 women (adult female) in cluster munition attacks in Syria, between the first use of cluster munitions documented on our database in July 2012 and March 2023. The death toll resulting from cluster munition attacks is distributed by the perpetrator party:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 835 civilians, including 337 children and 191 women.
- **Russian forces:** 218 civilians, including 57 children and 28 women.

Hundreds of clusters munitions in Syria have effectively turned into landmines. To this day, we are still recording killings of Syrian citizens by the explosion of old cluster submunitions. As of March 2023, we recorded the killing of no fewer than 382 civilians, including 124 children and 31 women, by the explosion of cluster submunitions left by older attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces that involved the use of cluster munitions since the first documented use of this weapon in July 2012.

Cluster munitions remnants have been scattered across the Syrian lands, posing a serious threat to the residents and Syria's future generations. On December 30, 2022, we released a report entitled, '[Cluster Munitions Remnants are an Open-Ended Threat to the Lives of Syria's Future Generations](#)', in which we included maps of some Syrian governorates showing the approximate locations of areas suspected to be blighted by cluster munition remnants so that local residents can take the necessary precautions to avoid them. Still, we must stress that this only reflects the bare minimum scope of cluster munition dispersion. Those maps show the areas that saw significant numbers of cluster munitions attacks and a death toll resulting from cluster munitions attacks.

Below is a map showing sites where cluster munitions remnants were scattered across Syria in the aftermath of the attacks by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces between July 2012 and March 2023.



4. Incendiary weapons: 171 attacks with incendiary weapons documented

Incendiary weapons are excessively indiscriminate weapons and are largely similar to cluster munitions, both in terms of the scope of dispersion and the possibility of their later reignition. Incendiary weapons are particularly known for being extremely dangerous when used directly against civilian and residential areas. When an incendiary substance comes into contact with the body, it can cause deep burns that reach the bones, leaving terrible scars, if not causing death. Meanwhile when used on agricultural areas and residential buildings, these weapons, due to their nature and that of the flammable substances they contain that can burn for prolonged periods of time, can also cause fires that damage the infrastructure and vital facilities. The use by Syrian-Russian alliance forces of incendiary weapons against populated areas and agricultural areas has had a catastrophic impact, with the results conclusively proving that they were used by these forces specifically to cause material and/or human damage, rather than to attain a military advantage.

Incendiary weapons have been used extensively by the Syrian regime since 2012. We noticed a significant rise in the rate of incendiary weapons use by the Syrian regime itself after Russia launched its military intervention in 2015. The large number of cases in which incendiary weapons have been used suggests a pattern, as well as reckless disregard, and sometimes a deliberate policy by Russian forces to cause as much damage as possible to the Syrian people and the Syrian lands.

As SNHR's database shows, we have documented no fewer than 171 attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons against civilian residential areas between March 2011 and March 2023.

Those attacks are distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 41 attacks.
- **Russian forces:** 125 attacks.
- **International coalition forces:** five attacks against residential neighborhoods in Raqqa city.

E. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

Over the course of the 12-year conflict, the various parties have subjected vital [civilian facilities to targeted](#), indiscriminate and deliberate bombardment. In many cases, we have documented the same civilian facility being targeted two or more times. Such acts of aggression against vital civilian facilities were not limited to bombardment, with dozens of vital civilian facilities also being repurposed as military centers or detention centers by the parties to the conflict in areas under their control, which, in turn, made these viable targets for other parties to the conflict. Denying civilians use of these vital facilities and services will have dire ramifications, both in the short-term and the long-term, one of which is driving residents to flee to safer, more stable areas that provide those services.

Since March 2011, we have recorded no fewer than 874 attacks on medical facilities, and 1,416 attacks on places of worship. We also documented damage to 1,611 schools, some of which were targeted in multiple attacks. According to our documentation, Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces have been responsible for roughly 87 percent of these attacks.



F. More than half of the Syrian population has been forcibly displaced either as IDPs or refugees

The level of violence to which Syrian civilians across the country have been subjected at the hands of the various parties to the conflict and the controlling forces has generated a state of great fear and terror among the public, driving many to seek safer areas after suffering indiscriminate bombardment, particularly at the hands of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces, which destroyed much or most of large numbers of Syrian cities, towns and villages, to the point that they became completely uninhabitable. Furthermore, the brutal security crackdowns by the Syrian regime's various security apparatuses against Syrians who rose up for freedom against the ruling regime played a large role in displacing thousands of Syrians to other locations, along with the policy of suffocating starvation sieges enforced by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in many areas, which were followed by coercive reconciliation agreements that resulted in the displacement of thousands more individuals from their home areas. The COI concluded that there are reasons to believe that pro-Syrian regime forces may have perpetrated a crime against humanity in the form of collective forced displacement. In fact, forced displacement are part of a longer series of aggressions and violations against millions of Syrians, including the wholesale destruction of homes and the seizure and pillaging of properties. Over the past years 12 years, we've documented many incidents in which vast convoys of people being forcibly displaced from their homes were targeted for bombardment as they walked or drove along roads during this heartbreaking process. Moreover, in the past two years, we documented a significant rise in the number of attacks targeting IDP camps, including both regular and irregular camps, either in a deliberate manner or through the use of indiscriminate weapons. In other words, IDPs in Syria are not safe even while or after fleeing.

IDPs have been forced to uproot their families in search of safety multiple times since the conflict began, with many lacking access to the most basic services, job opportunities, and sustainable housing. Naturally, IDPs are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, and thus they are the worst affected by economic crises, in addition to the decline of support and the steady dwindling in the past few years of the already meagre amount of humanitarian assistance delivered via the cross-border mechanism.

[The UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\) estimates](#) that roughly 13.3 million Syrians have been forced to flee internally or seek asylum in other countries since the beginning of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. These are divided into:

- Approximately 6.7 million IDPs, many of whom have been displaced more than once.
- Approximately 6.6 million refugees have been externally displaced, with the overwhelming majority seeking refuge in Syria's neighboring countries.



IDPs from Ma'aret al-Nu'man city and the surrounding villages in the southern suburbs of Idlib on the Idlib-Bab al-Hawa Highway heading for safer areas in the further northern Syria following the heavy bombardment by the Syrian-Russian alliance on the area - December 24, 2019

On February 6, 2023, a devastating earthquake hit southern Turkey and northern Syria, with approximately 7,259 Syrians dying as a result. The earthquake also inflicted further massive destruction and caused the forced internal displacement of roughly 90,000 Syrians according to the UN. This posed an additional burden on the region of northwestern Syria which was already suffering under the burden of severe overpopulation, having received hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced people who had fled there from other governorates over the past 12 years. There are currently 4.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria. Adding to this suffocating overpopulation is the fact that the region's infrastructure and vital civilian facilities have been targeted for years by the Syrian regime and its ally Russia, which had only made the consequences of the devastating earthquake even more tragic and severe for northwestern Syria.

IV. The International Community Has Miserably Failed in Bringing About a Resolution to the Syrian Conflict and in Realizing a Political Transition

Over the last 12 years, a number of Arab and international initiatives were proposed to put an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. These were ultimately reduced to three political processes: the Arab League process, the Geneva process, and the Astana/Suchi process. While each went through multiple rounds, unfortunately none of them ultimately yielded any meaningful change. Even worse, they never even reached a stage of negotiations. We have spoken in some detail about the milestones of each of the three processes [in our annual report released in March 2021](#), and [the subsequent annual report released in March 2022](#). We feel the need to emphasize the fact that none of those processes brought about any serious progress in terms of establishing a transitional ruling body or leading to any political transition or transitional justice. None of those three processes even helped to secure the release of one detainee in the Syrian regime's prisons or to reveal the fate of one missing person. On the contrary in fact, the Syrian regime is still behaving as if it will remain in power for the rest of time with utter disregard for all the UN Security Council's resolutions on political transitions shows that all these processes have had no effect whatsoever. This is manifested in the Syrian regime's holding parliamentary elections once every four years, as well as presidential elections, and most recently local administration elections last year, all on the basis of the 2012 Constitution which the regime adopted unilaterally, ignoring the outcome of the Geneva Statement ⁸ which was included in Security Council resolution 2118,⁹ and Security Council resolution 2254,¹⁰ both of which explicitly provide for conflict resolution through the establishment by the regime and opposition of a transitional ruling body with full powers to be charged with devising a new constitution that would be the basis for new parliamentary and presidential elections. Even more tellingly, in the past two years, the Syrian regime, having recaptured control of roughly 65 percent of Syria's lands, felt sufficiently emboldened to issue laws, decrees, and circulars expanding its existing powers of arrest, strengthening the grip of its security apparatus, and perpetuating its autocratic rule.

8. United Nations, Identical letters dated 5 July 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to [the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council \(A/66/856-S/2012/522\)](#)

9. United Nations Security Council, resolution 2118/2013 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2118\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2118(2013))

10. United Nations Security Council, resolution 2254/2013 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2254\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2254(2015))

Of the UN Security Council's 28 resolutions on Syria, most of their contents have yet to be implemented, including those concerning the detainees issue and chemical weapons

The UN Security Council has issued 28 resolutions to date on the situation in Syria, and the popular uprising for democracy that turned into an internal armed conflict. The first resolution, issued just over a year after the uprising started in April 2012,¹¹ was predated by two Russian-Chinese vetoes.¹² In regard to the most prominent issues, these were reflected in the Security Council resolutions as follows:

- Eight resolutions on the political process, cessation of hostilities, and the use of barrel bombs.
- Four resolutions referencing detainees and the issue of enforced disappearances.
- Three resolutions on chemical weapons, all of which referenced an intervention under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter in the event of the repetition of chemical weapons use.

Other than these, 40 percent of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council were related to the issue of UN humanitarian assistance, whose delivery does not even need to be addressed or permitted by the Security Council.

The Security Council has failed miserably in putting an end to the human rights violations in Syria, which, in many cases, have reached the level of crimes against humanity. Moreover, the Security Council has failed to implement most of the resolutions it adopted. No detainees have been released, nor have any of their fates been revealed. The Security Council also failed to take any action on the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons 184 times after the Security Council's adoption of the first resolution on the issue. Furthermore, the Security Council failed to implement any resolutions related to the political transition and cessation of hostilities against civilians.

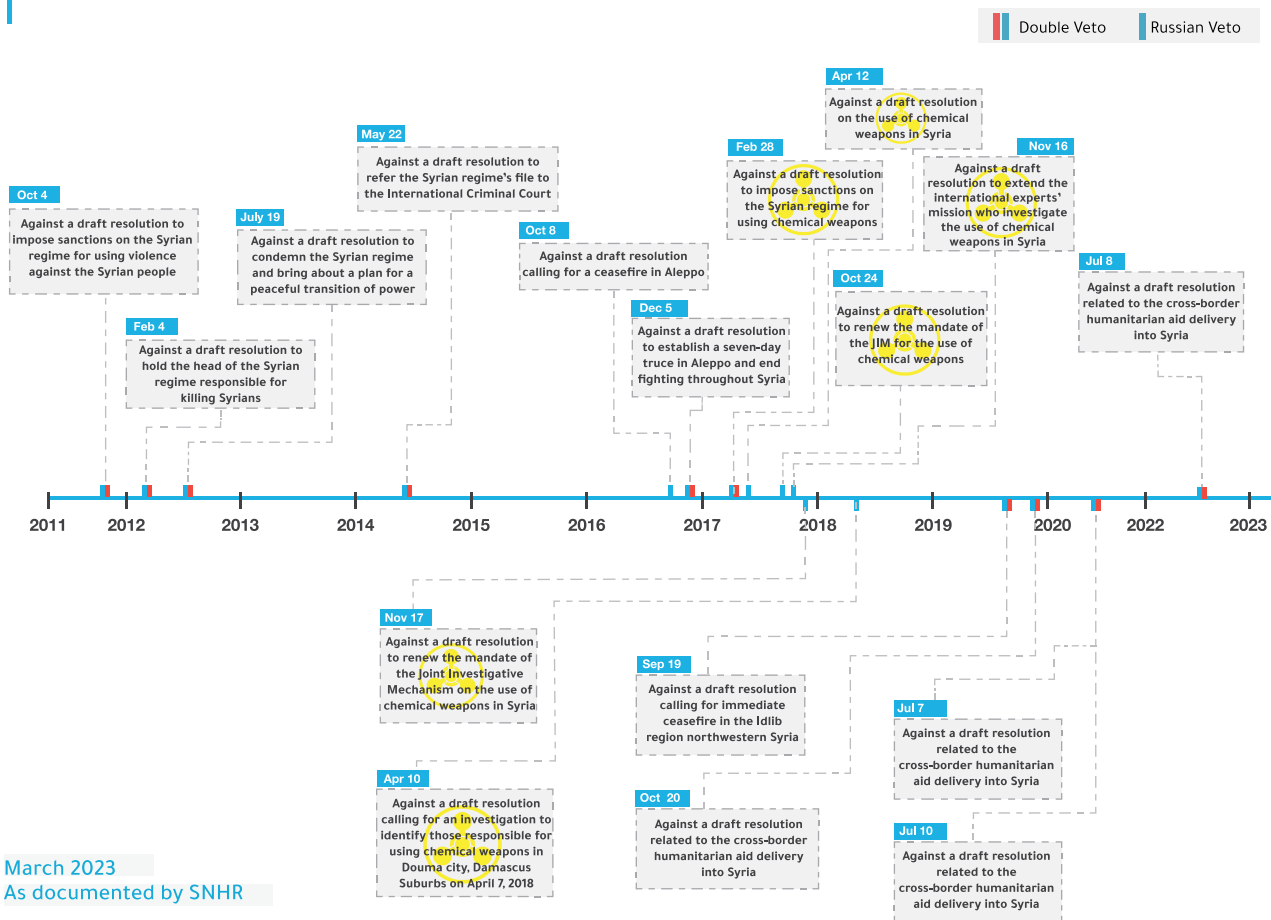
17 vetoes supporting the Syrian regime's continuing perpetration of crimes against humanity and war crimes by perpetuating its impunity

The UN Security Council's failure was not limited to failing to implement its own resolutions, but also extended to allowing the abuse of veto powers by Russia and China, all of whose vetoes have supported the Syrian regime's impunity, enabling the regime to escalate violence, use chemical weapons, and obstruct political transition to this very day. Furthermore, the Security Council has actively obstructed the course of justice by blocking the referral of the Syrian situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) despite the horrific violations committed against the Syrian people, which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. We, at SNHR, have repeatedly stressed that Russia should not have the right to use its veto in regard to any proposals on Syria and the Syrian conflict, given its status as a party to that conflict. Below are two graphs showing Russia's and China's use of their veto powers at the Security Council in regard to the situation in Syria since March 2011. The second graph shows a running count of the number of civilians killed by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in light of the use of veto powers.

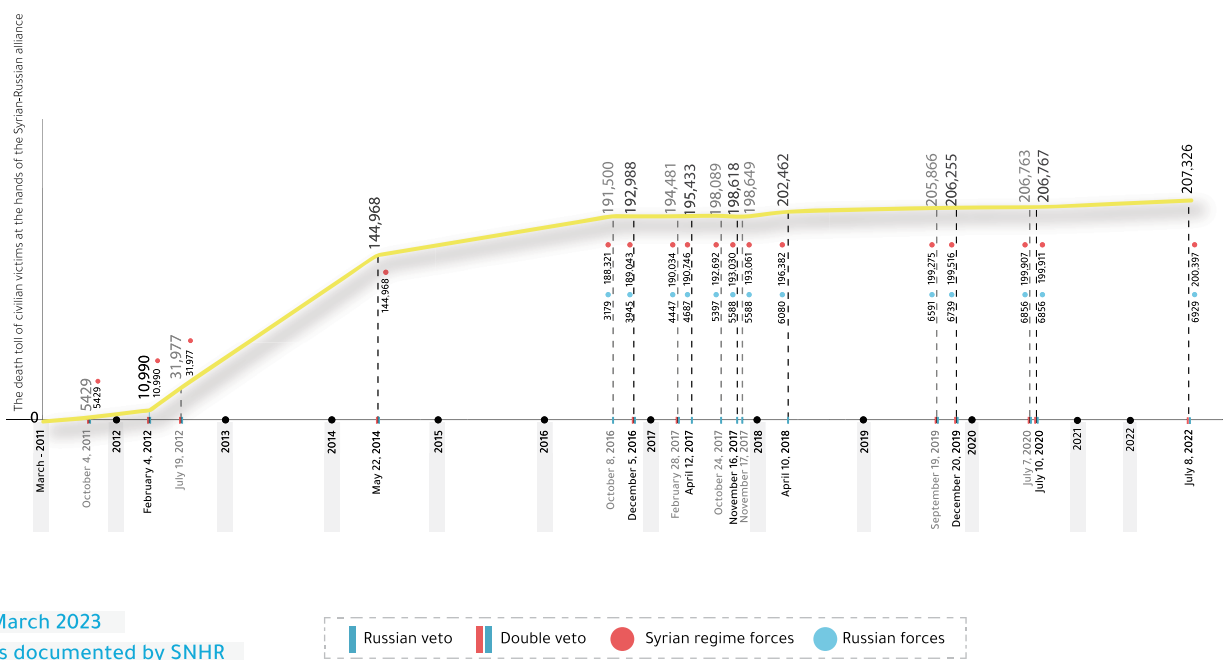
11. United Nations Security Council, resolution 2042, adopted on April 14, 2012 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2042\(2012\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2042(2012))

12. United Nations Security Council, draft [resolution S/2011/612, proposed on October 4, 2011.](#)

Russia and China has used its veto power 17 times to protect the Syrian regime at the Security Council



Reality of veto power use by Russia and China in the UN Security Council and the rise of the civilian victims death toll at the hands of the Syrian-Russian alliance with every use since March 2011



V. Politicization of the Humanitarian Assistance Issue Since 2014 Has Exacerbated the Damage of the February 6 Earthquake

On October 10, 2022, [the UN warned](#) that Syria would witness one of the harshest winters seen to date in the coming year due to the shortage of fuel and power and the overall socio-economic decline in the country. On December 22, 2022, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), released [a report](#) on humanitarian needs in 2023 in Syria, noting that Syria is still housing the largest IDP community in the world, of 6.8 million people. The report added that in 2023 15.3 million [people in the country would be in need of humanitarian assistance](#), the highest number documented to date since the start of the conflict, including 2.1 million IDPs living in camps.

On January 4, 2023, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [estimated](#) that 4.1 million people in northwest Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs, with 80 percent of these being women and children.

Indeed, the residents of northwestern Syria have fundamentally relied on UN cross-border humanitarian assistance for years now. However, Russia is exploiting their dire circumstances to use them as hostages, extorting the international community for material and political gains. SNHR was among the first groups to stress that delivering UN cross-border relief aid does not require any permission from the Security Council. In fact, SNHR has released four reports explaining in detail the legal reasons and the necessary and relevant context why this is the case.¹³

For years, we have noted that the international community needs to put an end to Russia's exploitation and take action to deliver impartial and necessary relief aid without seeking permission from the UN Security Council. In this context, SNHR supported the '[Cross Border Aid into Syria is Legal](#)' initiative, launched at the end of 2021, whose legal findings largely correspond with those documented in SNHR's reports. The initiative's members have held tours and meeting to publish and clarify their legal findings.

Despite all this, however, the international community has signally failed to respond to all these calls and recommendations, which has seriously aggravated the humanitarian crisis in northern Syria. It is utterly heartbreaking to realize that all of this meant that further catastrophic results exacerbated the already massive suffering of all those in northwest Syria affected by the devastating earthquake that hit the region, along with southern Turkey, on February 6. The late arrival of UN humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria following this catastrophic event was another grim mark of shame for the UN. This long delay in the arrival of UN relief aid left local civil society groups facing the fathomless horrors of the earthquake and its repercussions alone and without any assistance, leading to more people dying needlessly under the rubble. Furthermore, the UN's response in northwestern Syria was woefully and shamefully disproportionate to the magnitude of the catastrophe unleashed by the earthquake, with some UN mechanisms invoked late, while others were not invoked at all, such as issuing distress call to mobilize efforts or sending rescue teams from around the world. On February 15, we released a report as an initial response, summarizing the failure of the UN mechanisms put in place to respond to such natural disasters. In the report, we called on the UN to launch an internal investigation to identify the reasons that prevented and delayed the arrival of aid in northwestern Syria until days after the earthquake.

13. United Nations Security Council, draft [resolution S/2012/77, proposed on February 4, 2012](#).

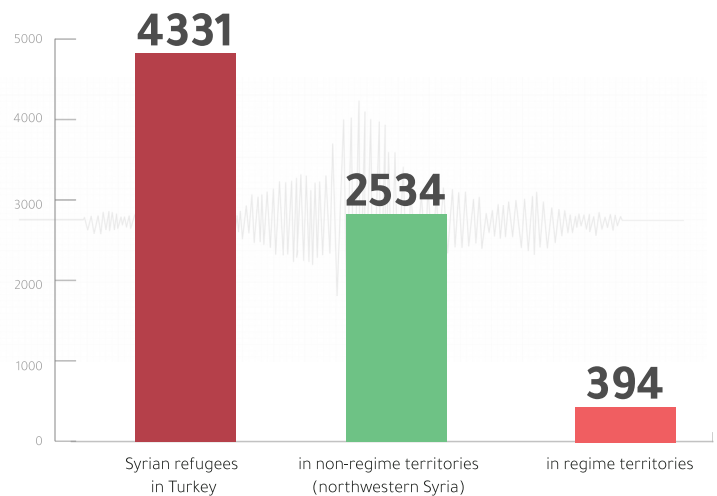
Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2020). 'The United Nations Should Continue Cross-Border Aid Delivery Even If Russia Vetoes the Extension of the Security Council Resolution' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=55169>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2021). 'UN Aid to Northern Syria, Which Is Neutral, Absolutely Essential, and Delivered with the Approval of the Controlling Forces, Does Not Need Permission from the Security Council' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=56507>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'UN Cross-Border Aid Must Continue to Enter Syria, Even If Russia Vetoes It' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=58024>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023). 'Russia's Veto Blocking UN Cross-Border Relief Aid is Unlawful and its Only Aim is to Seize UN Relief Aid' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=59021>

SNHR has documented the deaths of a total of 7,259 Syrians due both to the earthquake itself and to the late arrival of the UN and international humanitarian assistance between February 6, 2023, and February 27, 2023. The death toll is distributed by location as follows: 2,534 of the victims died in non-regime areas in the region of northwestern Syria, 394 died in regime areas, and 4,331 Syrian refugees died in Turkey. On February 28, we released a report entitled, [‘A Total of 7,259 Syrians, including 2,153 Children and 1,524 Women, Died Due to the Turkey-Syria Earthquake: 2,534 Died in Non-Regime Territories, 394 in Regime Territories, and 4,331 in Turkey’](#)



VI. All the Syrian Regime's Amnesty Decrees Have Resulted in the Release of Only 7,351 Arbitrarily Arrested Detainees, With the Regime Still Holding Roughly 135,253 Detainees/Forcibly Disappeared Persons

Since the popular uprising began in March 2011, the Syrian regime has arrested hundreds of thousands of Syrians on no clear charges and without presenting any evidence against them. These arrests were politically motivated as a means to silence dissent and thus shield the Syrian regime from any political change. As such, they are arbitrary, wholly unlawful detentions that violate international human rights law, as well as the Syrian constitution and Syrian law. We have detailed the conditions required for carrying out detention/arrest and interrogation in accordance with Syrian legislation [in our periodic reports](#). With the already massive number of missing Syrians steadily growing, and with more local and international human rights organizations issuing reports calling for action to address this issue, describing enforced disappearance in Syria as amounting to crimes against humanity, which implies that it is a central regime policy, the regime has hit on a strategy of frequently issuing amnesty decrees pardoning some of these detainees. It is our belief that this strategy aims to alleviate the pressure on the Syrian regime and to promote a narrative in state media of the regime as a generous and gracious benefactor; according to this false narrative, those “pardoned” are actually convicted criminals who have been generously forgiven and given another chance by the benevolent regime.

To date, the Syrian regime has released no fewer than 22 of these amnesty decrees since March 2011, most of which grant amnesty for a full, half, or quarter of the sentence handed down for the crimes and offenses for which detainees have been convicted. Some of those decrees incorporated legal articles and rulings related to detainees arrested over their expression of political views or their participation in the popular uprising. In addition, some of the decrees pardoned military servicemen who had been declared absent without leave from their military service (defectors) on the condition they surrender themselves within a time period specified by each decree, extending for a few months from the decree's publication. Meanwhile, other decrees were extensions of older decrees, particularly those related to military servicemen or civilians who took up arms.

All of the decrees were issued by the head of the Syrian Republic who also heads the Executive Authority, which is in itself a violation of the Syrian Penal Code. Meanwhile, the People's Assembly of Syria, the legislative body originally authorized to study and adopt general amnesty decrees, has never issued any amnesty decrees. Despite all these amnesty decrees, however, the Syrian regime is still detaining at least 135,253 Syrian citizens who are either detainees or forcibly disappeared persons. On November 16, 2022, we released a report entitled, [‘Breaking Down the Amnesty Decrees Issued by the Syrian Regime Between March 2011 and October 2022’](#) in which we revealed that, as of the date of the report's publication, all the regime's amnesty decrees had led to the release of 7,351 detainees (6,086 civilians and 1,265 military servicemen) from the regime's various civilian and military prisons and security branches across Syria. Of the 6,086 civilians released, 349 were women and 159 were still children at the time of their release. As such, it's extremely clear that amnesty decrees only secured the release of an extremely limited number of detainees, even as arbitrary arrests continue to be carried out in a widespread manner. Indeed, the Syrian regime is still continuing to carry out further arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances up to the present day, regardless of whatever amnesty decrees it may release.

VII. Enforced Disappearance Issue is the Ghost that Haunts the Families of the Missing, With Serious Concerns for the Fates of Nearly 112,000 Syrian Citizens

Syria is one of the world's worst countries in terms of enforced disappearance, with approximately 85 percent of all those arrested subsequently categorized as forcibly disappeared persons. At present, roughly 112,000 of the people detained by the parties to the conflict in Syria since March 2011 are classified as forcibly disappeared persons. While it's true that all the parties to the conflict have used detention and enforced disappearance to intimidate and submit the communities under their control, none comes close to the level of the Syrian regime, which has used enforced disappearance in a systematic manner as one of its favorite tools for suppression and intimidation, with the aim of quelling all dissent and of crushing and eradicating the regime's political opponents simply for expressing their views and participating in demonstrations calling for political change. Indeed, the Syrian regime has harnessed its security apparatus, which has tens of thousands of members, to pursue, arrest, torture, and disappear anyone involved in the popular uprising, since its very first days. The Syrian regime is responsible for the enforced disappearance of roughly 86 percent of all those classified as forcibly disappeared in Syria since March 2011. SNHR's database contains thousands of enforced disappearance cases, including dozens of whole families, women, and children who became forcibly disappeared immediately after their arrests. Their relatives have not received even the most basic information about their fate since the first moment of their arrest. Many of these family members have told us that they tried to find out the fate or whereabouts of their beloved ones through official and non-official means, but to no avail. The same can be said about our own efforts to do so by tracking the processes of transferring detainees/missing persons between detention centers through interviewing hundreds of survivors and eyewitnesses in order to find out if they saw any of these disappeared individuals in regime detention centers. This only supports our well-founded fears that these individuals may have been eliminated or executed by the regime personnel at checkpoints who were responsible for their initial arrest. In other words, they may have been summarily executed without ever being transferred to a detention center, as was the

case with the abductees in al-Tadamun neighborhood in Damascus.¹⁴ On the same subject, we wish to emphasize that Amjad Yousef and his colleagues (Najib Halabi, Bassam al-Hasan, and Fadi al-Saqr), the regime personnel responsible for the massacre, have been involved in arresting and forcibly disappearing hundreds of Syrians, summarily executing some of them. Moreover, these individuals are responsible for raping many of the wives or female relatives of the detainees they abducted and forcibly disappeared in exchange for information about their husbands' or loved ones' fate, not to mention being responsible for a wide range of other violations that have been and are still being carried out with impunity by the regime's security services against the Syrian people, including robbery, looting and other abuses.

No fewer than 1,609 forcibly disappeared persons have been acknowledged as dead by the Syrian regime through the civil registry offices: we believe all these died due to torture

In most cases, the Syrian regime never notifies its victims' families of their loved ones' death in detention centers at the time of their death. Instead, families learn of their relatives' deaths in regime detention centers either through survivors, by following multiple visits to the Military Police headquarters in Damascus, or through checking the records at the civil registry offices. In most cases, the families obtain such information some years after their loved ones' deaths.

In early 2018, however, some forcibly disappeared persons' families were shocked to discover that civil registry offices had registered the deaths of their loved ones, who had previously been 'disappeared' in regime detention centers, as having taken place years before. We have released four reports¹⁵ shedding light on these regime practices, which have continued since 2018, though less frequently..

From the start of 2022, we began receiving death certificates for individuals whose deaths in regime custody had not been revealed, even to their families, previously; these include prominent activists in the popular uprising, women, and children. Since then, we have felt even more compelled to continue our work on this harrowing and highly sensitive issue and to follow it closely. As of the end of December 2022, we have obtained 547 new death certificates, which stand out due to being obtained from sources within the Syrian regime, rather than from the civil registry offices, with the victims' families not having been notified by the regime of their loved ones' death. On December 20, 2022, we released [a detailed report](#) on this subject.

SNHR has supported all of the work carried out by the UN Syria Commission of Inquiry (COI) since its first report in November 2011 in relation to establishing a UN mechanism solely focusing on the issue of missing persons, including forcibly disappearing persons.¹⁶ We have tried repeatedly, in dozens of reports, to highlight the sheer staggering magnitude of this issue in Syria, where over 112,000 people are classified as forcibly disappeared, roughly 86 percent of them by Syrian regime forces. Such egregious criminality by those responsible makes the establishment of such a mechanism an imperative demand for the missing victims and their families. We have submitted a report to the OHCHR outlining our vision for such a mechanism, affirming that we are willing to cooperate, should such a mechanism be established, and to provide all the relevant information and data that we have documented on our database for 12 years to date.

14. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023). 'SNHR's 12th Annual Report: Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2022' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=59062>

15. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018). 'The Syrian Regime Records Forcibly Disappeared Persons as Dead in Civil Registration Offices' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=52450>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018). 'By Acknowledging the Death of 836 Forcibly-Disappeared Syrians at its hands, the Syrian Regime Convicts itself, yet the Security Council Does Nothing' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=52615>

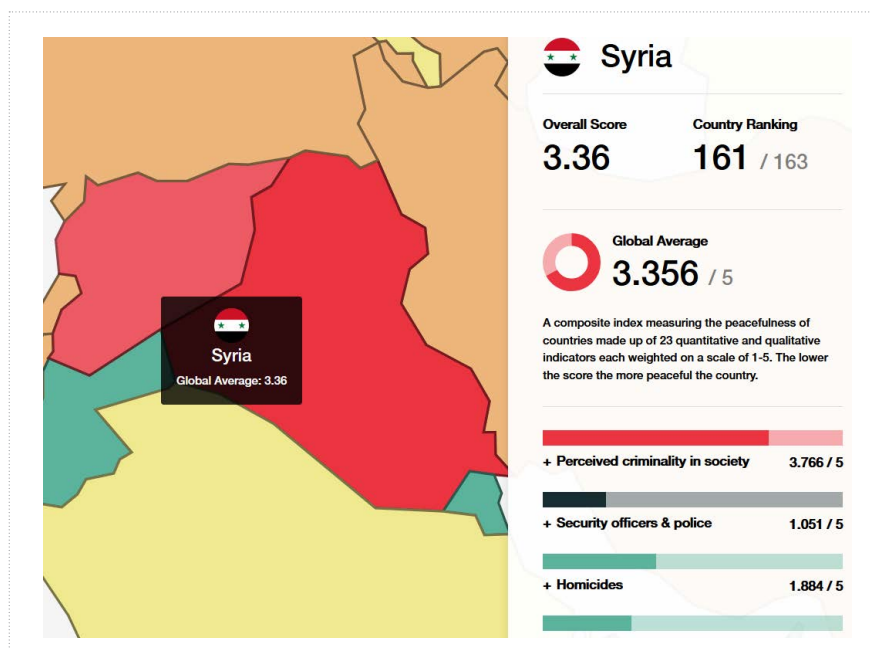
Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'The Syrian Regime Acknowledges the Death of 1,056 Syrian Citizens Forcibly Disappeared by the Regime Through the Civil Registry Departments, Including 54 from Deir al Asafeer, Whose Fate the Regime Revealed in February and March 2022' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=57705>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'SNHR Obtains Hundreds of Death Certificates for People Forcibly Disappeared by the Syrian Regime, Whose Families Have Not been Notified of Their Deaths, Which Have Not Been Announced by Civil Register Offices' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=58930>

16. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), 1st Report (A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1) (November 23, 2011).

VIII. Syria is Not Safe for its Remaining Residents, Let Alone for the Return of Refugees

The ongoing violations by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are very clearly the main catalyst in creating more refugees. Despite the reduction in the frequency of violations in the last two years, the cumulative impact of these violations for the last 12 years have catastrophically degraded the already dire human rights situation in the country, leading to the normalization of killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearance, forced displacement, torture, seizures of lands and properties, and the development of an alarming state of insecurity under which assassinations and remote bombings, as well as other types of violation, have run rampant. Due to these violations that threaten the essence of fundamental human rights and dignity, and with no end in sight, or any path to hold those involved accountable, hundreds of Syrians are still trying to flee their lands and sell their properties daily in order to seek asylum in other nations around the world. Not only are the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees strongly refusing any return to Syria in the current dangerous conditions, but the remaining citizens still in the country are desperately seeking any opportunity to flee, because Syria is no longer a habitable nation, and their most basic human rights are disregarded there. All this has taken a devastating toll on the country's economy that has plunged sharply in the last two years since 2021. In fact, Syria is now ranked among the worst nations globally in terms of many basic human rights. For one of many such examples, Syria is ranked in 161st place out of 163 nations on the annual Global Peace Index (GPI),¹⁷ issued annually on January 2, by [the Institute for Economics and Peace \(IEP\)](#).



Against this background, meanwhile, Russia is trying to promote a wildly implausible narrative that Syria, particularly the regime-controlled areas, is safe, stable, and equipped to take the returning refugees back. Russia's goal in promoting this narrative is to break the international isolation of the Syrian regime, rehabilitate it, and extort European countries, particularly through their far-right parties, by offering to take back Syrian refugees in return for those nations contributing to the country's reconstruction. In

17. The Global Peace Index covers 99.7 percent of the world's population. It is calculated using 23 indicators that vary between quantitative and qualitative in nature. The Index focuses on three domains: 1. Level of societal safety and security; 2. Extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict, and 3. Degree of militarization.

doing so, Russia is also attempting to promote the false perception that the damage to buildings and vital facilities is the reason preventing refugees from returning.

In tandem with the calls made by the Syrian regime and despite the exceptionally tough conditions endured by many refugees in the countries of asylum, SNHR has documented ongoing waves of emigration from Syria. We believe this is explained by the following reasons:

- Serious human rights violations are still being committed by the various parties to the conflict, primarily by Syrian regime forces and their allies.
- Military operations are still being carried out by the various parties to the conflict in different parts of Syria.
- The worsening economic, living, and humanitarian conditions across Syria. These are simply the predictable results of nearly 12 years of conflict. The most recent report by the COI noted that 2022 has been the worst to date in both economic and humanitarian terms since the start of the popular uprising in Syria.¹⁸ The same report stressed that Syria is wholly unsafe for the return of refugees.¹⁹

Due to the worsening situation for refugees in Syria's neighboring countries, especially Lebanon, followed by Turkey, we have documented increasing numbers of refugees risking illegal, and dangerous, trips to EU states, either by land through Turkey, or by sea via the Mediterranean Sea from the shores of Turkey, Lebanon, or the Arab Maghreb (North African) States. On October 25, 2022, the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) noted that its Missing Migrants Project had documented no fewer than 5,684 death cases on migration routes to and within Europe since the start of 2021, with Syrians making up the largest percentage of the identified victims.

SNHR stresses that the Syrian regime and its allies are the parties responsible for forcing Syrians to risk their lives in illegal and dangerous migration journeys in the hope of finding a safer country where they can secure the bare minimum of life needs and keep their families safe.

Deportation of refugees and refoulment of asylum seekers constitute violations of international law

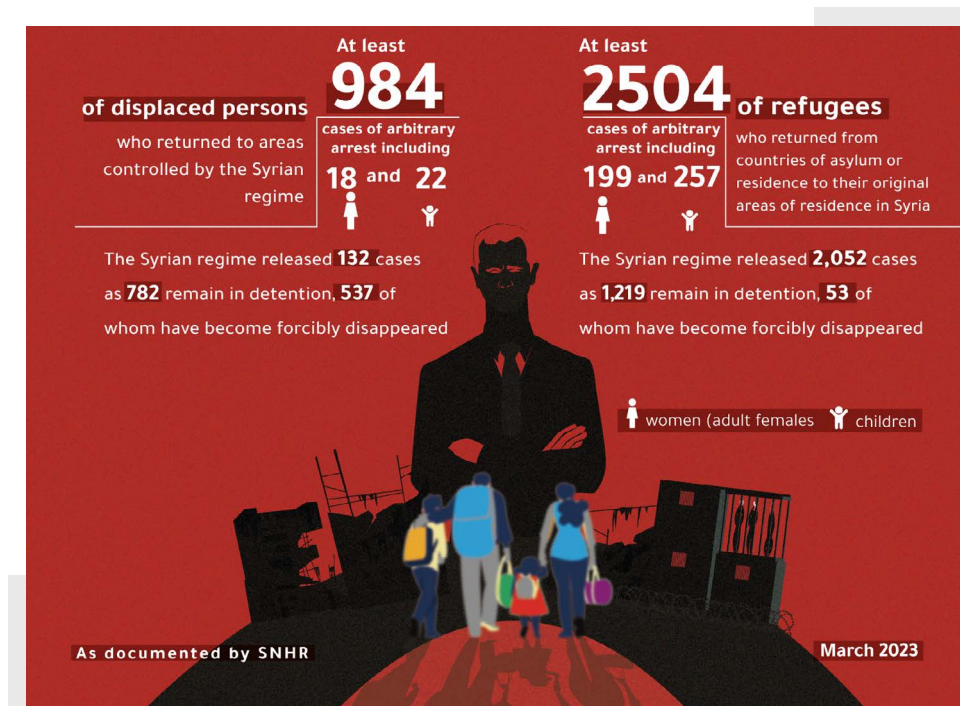
No government, having assessed the clearly dangerous situation in Syria, has the right to then, accordingly, make the decision to deport Syrian refugees back to the country. Indeed, the UNHCR, COI, international human rights organizations, and local organizations that are active and specialize in documenting the violations in Syria are the only bodies in a position to assess the situation in Syria. All of these bodies have confirmed that Syria is completely unsafe for the return of refugees.

We, at SNHR, have stressed in dozens of report, and according to reports by the COI, that returning refugees experience the same terrible range of violations endured by the country's remaining residents. The primary reason for this is the absence of law, and the domination of oppression, despotism, and the centralization of authorities. Indeed, refugees will never be able to enjoy a free and dignified return to their home country unless a political transition is achieved towards the establishment of a democratic government that respects human rights.

18. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). ['Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic'](#) submitted to the 51st session of the Human Rights Council (September 14, 2022).

19. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). ['Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic'](#) submitted to the 51st session of the Human Rights Council (September 14, 2022).

SNHR has documented the arbitrary arrest of no fewer than 2,504 returning refugees, including 257 children and 199 women (adult females), on their return to Syria from their countries of asylum or residence between the beginning of 2014 and March 2023. All of these arrests were conducted by Syrian regime forces. A total of 1,517 of those arrested were subsequently released, while 987 are still detained, with 746 of these 987 going on to be classified as forcibly disappeared. Similarly, we also documented the arrest of 984 IDPs, including 22 children and 18 women, on their return to regime areas. Of these, the Syrian regime released 246, while 738 are still under arrest, with 472 cases, of the 738, going on to be classified as forcibly disappeared.



IX. After Having Committed Serious Violations and Crimes Against Humanity, Attempts are being Made to Rehabilitate the Syrian Regime

Normalizing relations with the Syrian regime is an insult to the dignity of the state that does so, in addition to being a grotesque insult to the regime's millions of Syrian victims, especially those who have been killed by the various weapons used by the Syrian regime, including chemical weapons, or who have died due to torture. Such rehabilitation also constitutes a violation of international law since it is an act of support for a regime that has committed, and still is committing crimes against humanity against its people. The last three years have seen multiple attempts to rehabilitate the Syrian regime,²⁰ spearheaded by Russia and its ally Algeria.²¹ We find it grotesque and morally reprehensible that countries such as [Jordan](#), [Oman](#), [UAE](#),²² as well as governing entities like [Hamass](#)²³ have chosen this [anti-Syrian path](#).

20. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'On the 11th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising: 228,647 Syrian Civilians Documented Killed, Including 14,664 by Torture, with 151,462 Arbitrarily Detained/Forcibly Disappeared, and 14 Million Others Displaced' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=57507>
21. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'Condemning Algeria's Attempts to Perpetuate the Syrian Regime's Impunity and Voting Nine Times in the Regime's Favor in the Human Rights Council' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=57589>
22. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'Condemning Algeria's Attempts to Perpetuate the Syrian Regime's Impunity and Voting Nine Times in the Regime's Favor in the Human Rights Council' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=57589>
23. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'The Syrian Regime Has Killed At Least 3,207 Palestinians, 497 of them Under Torture, Arresting and Forcibly Disappearing 2,721 More From March 2011 to the Present' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=58695>

In fact, these shameful attempts at rehabilitating the Syrian regime have not been limited to states, but also extend to UN officials, and officials from other international organizations. We shed light on such practices in [our last annual report](#).²⁴ It is worth noting that such diplomatic visits and normalization attempts have increased since the February 6 earthquake, being justified under the pretext of negotiating with the Syrian regime to organize the delivery of humanitarian relief aid, since the regime has made it clear that it will only agree to allow relief aid to be brought in if UN and international officials visit Damascus. This further suggests that the Syrian regime is exploiting the suffering of those affected by the earthquake to use them as hostages solely to achieve political gain for itself with no regard for any legal or moral considerations. It's also been confirmed that the regime is pillaging approximately 95 percent of the relief aid intended for those affected by the earthquake as we pointed out in our report released on February 28.²⁵

X. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- The Syrian regime has singularly failed to uphold its responsibilities in protecting the Syrian people from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility necessarily entails the prevention of such crimes and the prevention of the instigation of committing such crimes by all means possible. According to international law, in the event that the state demonstrably fails to protect its people from serious crimes, or in the event that it is the perpetrator of such crimes, as is the case with the Syrian regime, the responsibility shifts to the international community to intervene and take protective measure collectively and decisively.²⁶
- All parties to the conflict in Syria have violated both international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with the Syrian regime and its allies being the perpetrators of by far the largest number of violations.
- Syrian regime forces have perpetrated various violations that amount to crimes against humanity, ranging from extrajudicial killing to torture, forced displacement, and others, with all these crimes being perpetrated in a systematic and widespread manner at the same time. In addition, Syrian regime forces have committed war crimes through indiscriminate bombardment and the destruction of buildings and facilities. Not only has the Syrian regime's government breached international humanitarian law and customary law, it has also violated Security Council resolutions – particularly Resolution No. 2042 which is concerned with releasing detainees, and Resolution No. 2139 which is concerned with ceasing indiscriminate attacks and enforced disappearances. All of these issues have yet to be addressed with any form of accountability in light of the legitimacy conferred on the regime through Russian-Chinese protection and Western silence.
- The state has central control over its detention centers. Those centers are not placed under any judicial supervision whatsoever by the general prosecution service, in direct conflict with the laws regulating criminal trials. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that deaths due to torture would occur without the knowledge of the ruling regime in the state. Over the past 12 years, there have been an abundance of reports of deaths due to torture in the Syrian

24. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'On the 11th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising: 228,647 Syrian Civilians Documented Killed, Including 14,664 by Torture, with 151,462 Arbitrarily Detained/Forcibly Disappeared, and 14 Million Others Displaced' Retrieved March 14, 2023, from: <https://snhr.org/?p=57507>

25. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023). 'A Total of 7,259 Syrians, including 2,153 Children and 1,524 Women, Died Due to the Turkey-Syria Earthquake: 2,534 Died in Non-Regime Territories, 394 in Regime Territories, and 4,331 in Turkey.' Retrieved March 13, 2023 from: <https://snhr.org/?p=59224>

26. United Nations, General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

regime's detention centers within Syrian society, and published in Syrian media outlets, and in regional and international media outlets. Even more damningly, the Syrian regime itself has informed dozens of families of their relatives' death in detention centers, usually citing such implausible causes as 'heart attack', without returning the victims' bodies to their grieving loved ones.

- The Syrian regime is obliged to prove that the deaths that occurred in its detention centers did not take place due to torture and to return the victims' bodies to their families.
- The Syrian regime releases falsified figures on the Syrian population, and refuses to register any details of the Syrian citizens who were killed in bombardments, or those who died due to torture, in the civil registry. The regime also refuses to release any electoral register or records, leaving it free to publish any fabricated voter turnout percentage and election results it wishes at election times.
- The states whose representatives attended the 2005 World Summit²⁷ unanimously affirmed their responsibility to protect their own populations from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means; furthermore, when the state clearly fails to protect its population from atrocity crimes, or is itself committing such crimes as in the case of the Syrian regime, this means that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner²⁸.
- The Syrian regime has no interest in pursuing any process of political transition because this would lead to a transition from dictatorship to democracy.
- In times of armed conflict, all civilians must have access to all necessary aid, according to customary international law.³⁰
- Russia cannot hide behind the principle of sovereignty and the Syrian regime's approval, since the regime is the main cause of the displacement of millions of IDPs, and does not care about these people having access to UN relief aid.
- Russian forces have violated Security Council resolution 2139, as well as resolution 2254, through indiscriminate bombardment. Additionally, Russian forces have violated many rules of international humanitarian law, committing dozens of violations that amount to war crimes through indiscriminate, disproportionate bombardment, particularly given the use of excessive power in these attacks, as well as violating Article 8 of the Rome Statute by committing intentional homicide, all of which constitute war crimes.

27. United Nations, General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

28. United Nations, General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

29. Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 23 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/380?OpenDocument>

Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Articles 68, 69, 70, 71

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977?activeTab=1949GCs-APs-and-commentaries>

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, Article 8 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, Article 18 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>

30. "The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control." International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 55](#) of customary international humanitarian law.

"The parties to the conflict must ensure the freedom of movement of authorized humanitarian relief personnel essential to the exercise of their functions. Only in case of imperative military necessity may their movements be temporarily restricted." International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 56](#) of customary international humanitarian law.

- The Russian and Syrian authorities, as well as the other parties to the conflict, have failed to launch any serious investigations into their attacks in the past years. They also failed to prevent those attacks or hold those responsible for those attacks accountable.
- Russia has obstructed the political process and caused a suffocating humanitarian crisis that affected millions of IDPs by blocking the UN cross-border aid from freely entering Syria. Russia has been involved with the Syrian regime in displacing the overwhelming majority of IDPs in Syria today.
- Neither the Russian or Syrian authorities, nor any of the other parties to the conflict, have conducted any serious investigations into any of their attacks throughout all these years, and all have also failed to prevent any of these attacks and to punish those responsible.
- The Russian regime has been involved in backing the Syrian regime, and has committed crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people, through shielding the regime politically from international law, as well as through supplying the Syrian regime with weapons and military expertise. This has been abundantly clear since the start of Russia's direct military intervention in favor of the Syrian regime. Supporting a regime that has been involved in crimes against humanity constitutes a categorical violation of international law and makes Russia subject to accountability.

Recommendations

UN Security Council and the United Nations

- Members of the Security Council must stop using their veto to protect the Syrian regime, which has committed hundreds of thousands of violations over the past 12 years, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- The UN Security Council should take additional steps following the adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly demands that all parties should, *"...Immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment."*
- Find ways and mechanisms to implement Security Council Resolutions 2041, 2042, 2139, and Article 12 of Resolution 2254 regarding detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in Syria.
- Take action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to protect detainees from certain death inside detention centers, and to put an end to the epidemic of enforced disappearance that continues to plague Syria, posing a threat to the security and stability of society, act to end torture and deaths due to torture inside Syrian regime detention centers, and to save whoever is left among the detainees as quickly as possible.
- Disclose the fate of the nearly 112,000 persons forcibly disappeared in Syria, 86 percent of them by the Syrian regime.
- Following the failure of the parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to comply with any of the Security Council resolutions concerning the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs or enforced disappearance, the UN Security Council must, after 12 years, intervene militarily in order to protect Syrian civilians.

- A state involved in a conflict should not have the right to use its veto powers. Russia is directly involved in the Syrian conflict and is using its veto powers in its own and the Syrian regime's favor even though both are parties to this armed conflict.
- There is a need to refer the Syrian issue from the UN Security Council to the United Nations General Assembly and to implement the 'Uniting for Peace' principle after 12 years of failure on the part of the Security Council to protect civilians or to help in ending the Syrian conflict.
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and all those involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes should be held accountable.
- Seriously work to achieve a political transition under the Geneva Communiqué and Security Council Resolution No. 2254, to ensure the stability and territorial integrity of Syria, and the dignified and safe return of refugees and IDPs.
- Establish security and peace in Syria and implement the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine (R2P) in order to preserve Syrians' lives, heritage, and cultural artifacts from being destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- Ensure the safety and security of millions of Syrian refugees, especially women and children, who have been displaced worldwide, and ensure their safety from arrest, torture, or enforced disappearance if they choose to return to areas controlled by the Syrian regime.
- Request all relevant United Nations agencies to make greater efforts to provide humanitarian and food aid and medical assistance in areas where the fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons' camps, and follow-up with those states that have pledged the necessary contributions.
- Relinquish control over the delivery of UN cross-border humanitarian assistance, since it should be within the scope of the UN General Assembly and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

International Community

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

- Refer the situation in Syria to the ICC, or quickly establish a tribunal dedicated to trying crimes against humanity and war crimes to end the cycle of impunity that has now spanned more than a decade in Syria.
- Expand political and economic sanctions against the Russian regime for committing war crimes in Syria, for continuing to violate sanctions imposed against the Syrian regime, and for assisting it in breaching UN Security Council resolutions, including those regarding the non-recurrence of using chemical weapons and barrel bombs.
- Put real pressure on Russia and Iran, and categorize them as key partners in the violations committed in Syria since they continue to supply the Syrian regime with weapons, as well as due to their direct involvement in thousands of violations against Syrian citizens.
- Provide protection and assistance to forcibly displaced women and children, including IDPs and refugees, and take into account their specific needs, primarily for protection.
- Fulfill the commitment of pledged financial contributions:
 - Assist neighboring countries and provide all possible support to increase the level of education and healthcare in these countries which host the largest number of female and child refugees.
 - Establish mechanisms to end the bombing of schools and kindergartens, protect these facilities, and work to create a safe learning environment, which is the lowest possible level of protection that could be offered for civilians.
- At a minimum, pressure must be applied on the Syrian regime to ensure that international observers, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, are given unconditional and unrestricted access to women and girls in detention centers.
- Support the political transition process and impose pressure to compel the parties to implement the political transition within a period of no more than six months so that most of the violations end and millions of displaced people can safely return to their homes.
- Stop any forcible return of Syrian refugees, since the situation in Syria continues to be unsafe, and instead impose pressure to achieve a political transition that would ensure the automatic return of millions of refugees.
- Accelerate a political resolution in Syria that would enable Syrians to hold free and fair political, parliamentary, and local elections that respect the rules of election laws.
- Condemn the laws issued by the Syrian regime that violate the rights of millions of the Syrian people, which are being enforced under the threat of arms and authority.

Parties to the conflict

- Comply with the rules of customary humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions, ensure that civilians are treated as neutral, release detainees and hostages, stop torture, and reveal the fate of the disappeared and missing persons.
- Respect the principles of international human rights law in the areas under their control.

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and local and international humanitarian and relief organizations

- Coordinate humanitarian aid operations according to the areas worst affected and reject attempts at pressure and blackmail by the Syrian regime which is working to harness aid to its advantage.
- Allocate adequate resources for the rehabilitation of child and female survivors, especially those who have been directly affected by violations, or subjected to violence, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage, giving priority to the areas worst affected.

UN special envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- The Syrian regime continues to hold presidential, parliamentary, and local elections with no regard for the negotiation process. The UN special envoy to Syria should take a clear position on the deadlock of the process of political transition.
- Call for rapid implementation of democratic political change that restores victims' rights and embodies the principles of transitional justice.

Supporting states and the EU

- Support the processes of documenting human rights violations in Syria that expose the Syrian regime's atrocious practices and their continuing nature, as well as the regime's violation of the principles of international law.
- Take further steps towards accelerating the completion of the process of political transition towards democracy and human rights.
- The situation in Syria is still in a critical state in terms of respecting basic rights, and any citizen may be subjected to arrest under ludicrously vague and overly broad laws. Therefore, we recommend that refugees should not be returned until such a political transition is achieved, as there will be no stability, safety and security in light of the survival of the current Syrian regime and the 'Counter-Terrorism' Court.

- Economic sanctions imposed on the two main backers of the Syrian regime, namely Iran and Russia, must be intensified, which is something that can be effectively achieved by the European Union. While civilian protection and safe zones continue to be the primary demands, economic sanctions also remain an effective course of action.
- Provide every possible assistance to the active civil society groups working to rehabilitate and reintegrate female victims into their communities, and support operations for the support and rehabilitation of female survivors in areas of displacement and asylum.

Neighboring countries:

- Ensure that refugees fleeing Syria are able to seek asylum, respect their rights, including the prohibition of refoulement, and expedite reunification. EU states and other countries should alleviate the burden on neighboring countries and receive more Syrian refugees, while donor countries should increase their assistance to the UNHCR and civil societies organizations in countries of asylum.

League of Arab States:

- Absolutely reject any possibility of the Syrian regime's return to the Arab League in light of its continued involvement up to the present date in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Humanitarian Organizations:

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons, primarily widows and orphans.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We would like to extend our most heartfelt gratitude to the families of the victims and to the local activists in all fields for their greatly valued contribution to this report. We also extend our sincere condolences to the families of all victims.



www.snhr.org - info@snhr.org