

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	2041
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Syrian Network for Human Rights
Titel:	On the 13th Anniversary of the Start of the Popular Uprising, 231,278 Syrian Civilians Have Been Documented Killed, Including 15,334 due to Torture, 156,757 Have Been Arrested and/or Forcibly Disappeared, While 14 Million Remain Forcibly Displaced
Udgivet:	15. marts 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	31. juli 2024

On the 13th Anniversary of the Start of the Popular Uprising

231,278 Syrian Civilians Have Been Documented Killed, Including **15,334** due to Torture, **156,757** Have Been Arrested and/or Forcibly Disappeared, While **14 Million** Remain Forcibly Displaced

The Heroic Syrian People Who Rose
and Confronted the World's Most
Vicious Dictatorial Regime 13 Years
Ago Have been Abandoned in Their
Quest for a Democratic Political
Transition

Friday 15 March 2024

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

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I. Introduction: The 13th Annual Report Since the Start of the Syrian Uprising that Called for Freedom, Dignity, and Democratic Transition

Armed with nothing but their unshakable resolve and extraordinary bravery, the Syrian people set out to transform the Syrian nation from a hereditary dictatorship ruled with iron and fire by one murderous family, to a democracy rooted in the principles of free and fair elections. In their fateful quest, the Syrian people rose up to reclaim their long-denied dignity that had been stolen by the regime's barbaric security apparatus. Popular protests rapidly swept across Syria, showing the nationwide yearning to take back the country from the savage rule of an autocratic dictatorship and its brutal security forces. Against the regime's massive military power, however, this longing for freedom and human rights was not enough, with the hopeful, joyous chants of the Syrian protesters at these huge demonstrations muted by the barbarism of the regime's response in the form of live bullets, mass arrest targeting prominent activists leading the demonstrations, and vicious torture that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. Indeed, there are still political prisoners who have been forcibly disappeared since 2011.

The Syrian regime's gross violations, many of which constituted crimes against humanity' coupled with the abject and absolute failure of the international community, including the UN Security Council, meant that what began as peaceful protests quickly devolved into an internal armed conflict which escalated from the first quarter of 2012, with many armed factions emerging in subsequent years. As with all conflicts, the Syrian conflict has had a vast and terrible human and material cost and numerous complexities, but however many other parties have been involved, the Syrian regime and its allies have been and are still by far the most prolific perpetrators of every kind of human rights violation in Syria. All the Arab, regional, and international efforts made so far have failed to resolve the armed conflict in Syria.

For 13 years, the Syrian people has been enduring all kinds of violations, including killing, torture, enforced disappearance, indiscriminate bombardment, and forced displacement. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) team has been documenting violations on a daily basis since 2011 in line with a rigorous methodology that has been constantly updated to keep pace with the most modern tools and criteria, not to mention overcoming great logistic and security challenges. SNHR is driven by our mission to expose and condemn the perpetrators of human rights violations in preparation for holding them to account, to lay bare their ugly nature in front of the Syrian and international communities, and, above all, to protect victims' rights and ensure that their horrendous suffering is not forgotten.

This annual report constitutes an update of last year's figures on the many violations experienced by the Syrian people in their quest for democracy, and the massive cost they have paid and continue to pay in pursuit of this quest. It is our aim in this report to first and foremost reiterate the Syrian people's right to hold those responsible for violations against them accountable, most prominently the ruling regime that has been at the root of their suffering and of the conflict, and, secondly, to reiterate that the Syrian people alone have the right to choose how to govern their nation in a free and democratic process, without being subjected to oppression and indignity at the hands of the various forces controlling various parts of Syria today.

As Fadel Abdulghany, SNHR Executive Director, says:

“ This report serves as a testimony to the extraordinary bravery of the Syrian people in their struggle for freedom, dignity, and democracy. On the other hand, it is also a bleak portrait of the ever-continuing suffering and injustice endured by the people of Syria, in addition to exposing the international community's abject utter failure to save them. All of these points serve to reiterate and emphasize the imperative need to refocus on the Syrian issue and bring about a political resolution in line with Security Council resolution 2254. ”



II. Dire Losses on the Level of individuals and the State in the Face of the Hereditary Dictatorial Rule as the Quest for Joining the Free, Democratic World Continues in Syria

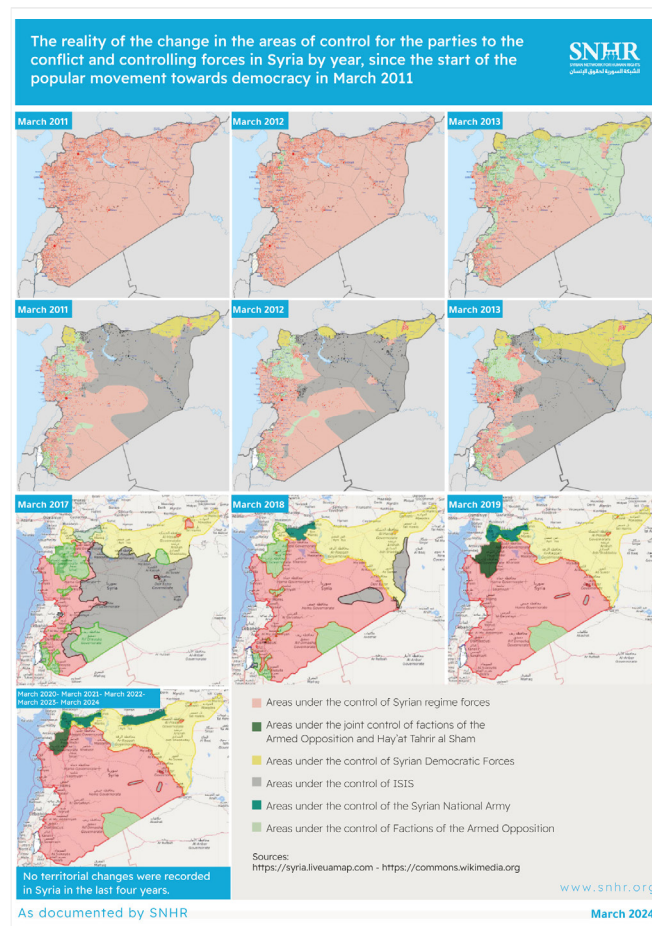
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A. Major changes in territorial control following new military developments on the ground, with the parties to the conflict committing gross violations in their quest to expand their military control

With the popular uprising for democracy devolving into a conflict, different areas of Syria have seen major changes in terms of territorial control over the course of the conflict, with some happening gradually and other more rapidly, all in accordance with the military developments on the ground. Another notable development was the participation of several parties in the military conflict.

In their efforts to consolidate or expand territorial control, all the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria have perpetrated human rights violations, but the Syrian regime has continued to be by far the most prolific perpetrator of violations by far, exceeding all other parties individually or collectively. It was also the regime who chose the security crackdown as a strategy to address, or more accurately to crush, the popular movement calling for freedom, dignity, and a democratic political transition, since its earliest days. Indeed, the Syrian regime has committed widespread killings and arrests, with these violations growing both in numbers and type, and still continuing to this day, with some even amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes as attested to [by dozens of reports by the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic \(COI\)](#).

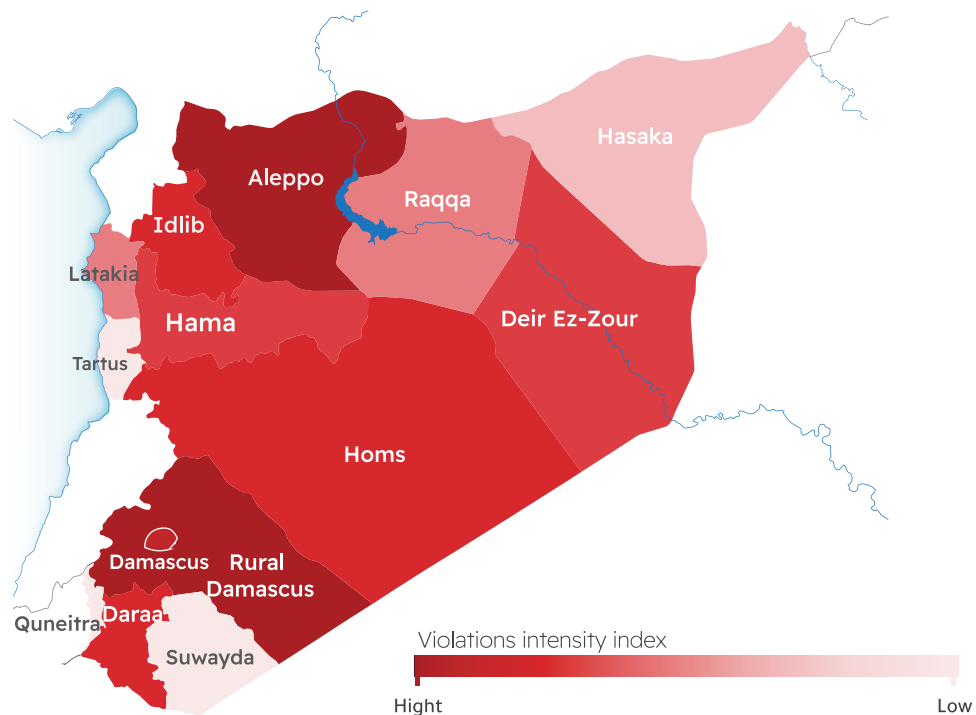
It should be noted, however, that the number of military operations' rates has dramatically decreased following [the ceasefire agreement](#)¹ going into effect in the Idlib region on March 6, 2020. As such, there have been minor territorial changes ever since. The following maps illustrate the territorial changes among the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011.



1. The agreement was officially established in a meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Russian capital, Moscow, on March 5, 2020.

To give a sense of the magnitude and scale of the violations suffered by the Syrian regime in light of these territorial changes and military conflict, we drew upon data from SNHR's archives and database on the most prominent human rights violations, primarily from the databases on civilian extrajudicial killings, on arrests/enforced disappearance, and on the use of unlawful weapons (chemical weapons, cluster munitions, barrel bombs), to design a map that shows the geographical density of the most prominent human rights violations across all Syria's governorates. While our databases, on both extrajudicial killings and arrests, feature a filter function to enable users to sort victims according to the location where the violation took place or the victim's area of origin, we focus primarily on the location where each violation took place in our collection and collation of the data, which refers to the governorate where the killing, arrest, or use of an indiscriminate weapon took place regardless of the victim's governorate of origin. Finally, it must be noted that the data we have been able to document represents the bare minimum of the actual magnitude and scale of the violations that took place, in light of the high density of violations and the challenges we encounter in the documentation process. These issues are further detailed in [our work methodology](#).

Map showing the geographical density of the most prominent human rights violations that were committed by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and March 2024



B. Toll of the most prominent human rights violations committed in Syria in the 13 years between March 2011 and March 2024, as documented on SNHR's database

1. Extrajudicial killing: 231,278 civilian deaths documented, including 30,193 children and 16,451 women

Syria remains one of the world's most dangerous countries for civilians, with 13 years to date of extrajudicial killings by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces, primarily the Syrian regime.

SNHR has documented the deaths of at least 231,278 civilians, including 30,193 children and 16,451 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and March 2024. These are distributed as follows:

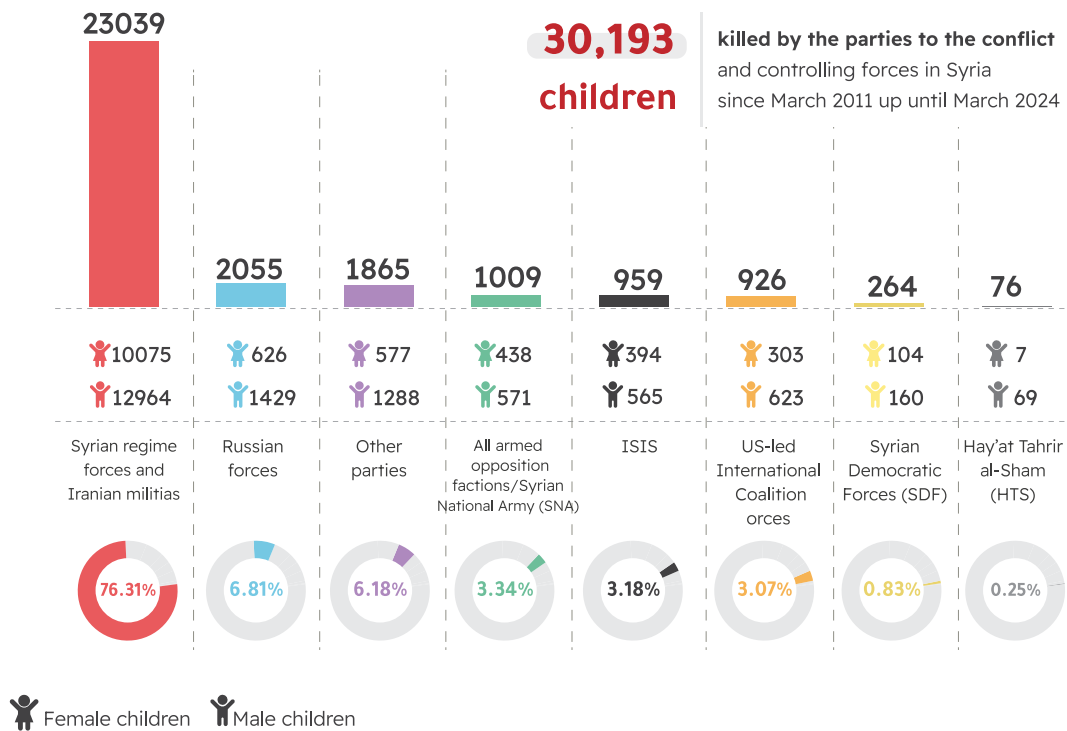
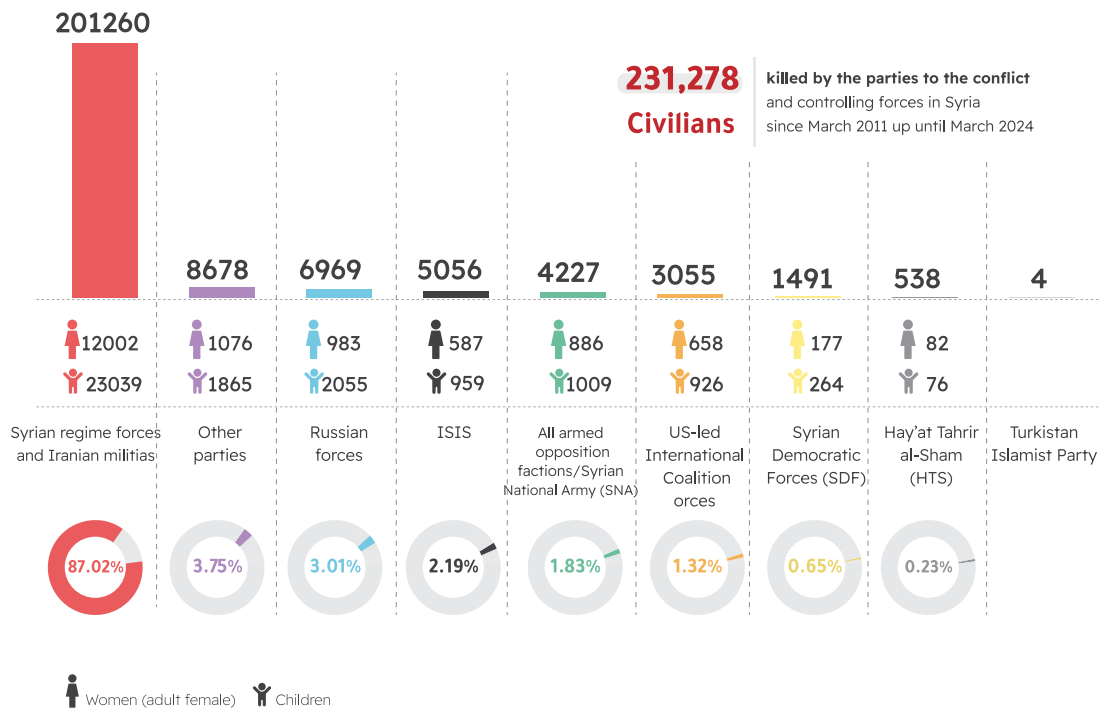
- Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias:² 201,260 civilians, including 23,039 children and 12,002 women.
- Russian forces: 6,969 civilians, including 2,055 children and 983 women.
- ISIS: 5,056 civilians, including 959 children and 587 women.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)³: 538 civilians, including 76 children and 82 women.
- Turkistan Islamic Party: Four civilians.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA):⁴ 4,227 civilians, including 1,009 children and 886 women.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): 1,491 civilians, including 264 children and 177 women.
- US-led International Coalition forces: 3,055 civilians, including 926 children and 658 women.
- Other parties: 8,678 civilians, including 1,865 children and 1,076 women.

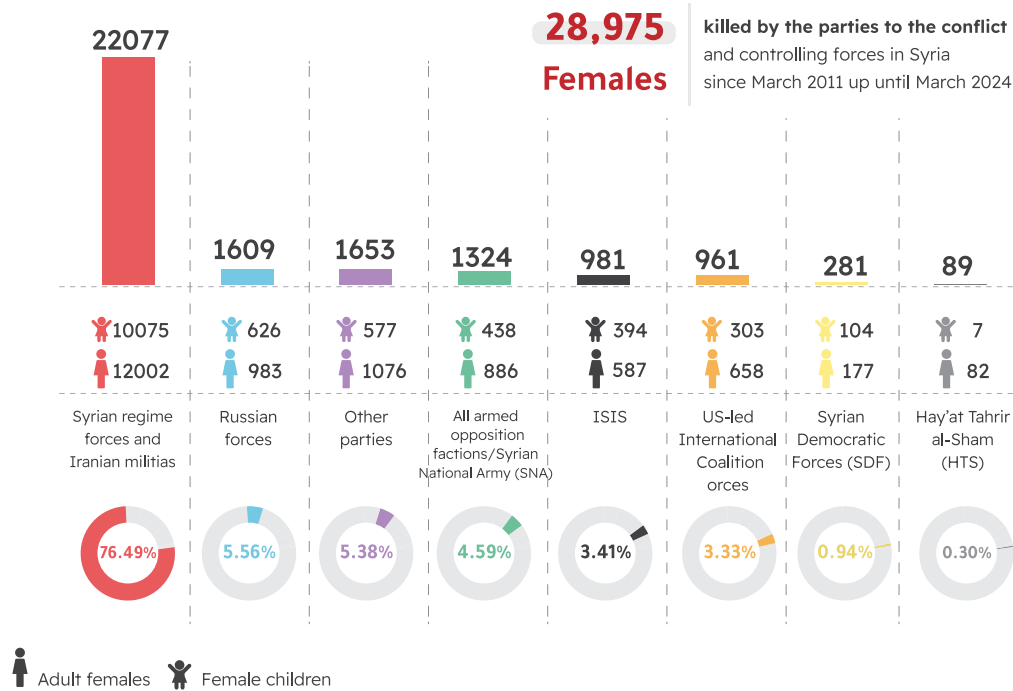
2. We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is that of a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the regime's security apparatus. As a result, the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under autocratic, hereditary 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 president assisted by the heads of the security branches.

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

3. Designated as a terror group by the UN.

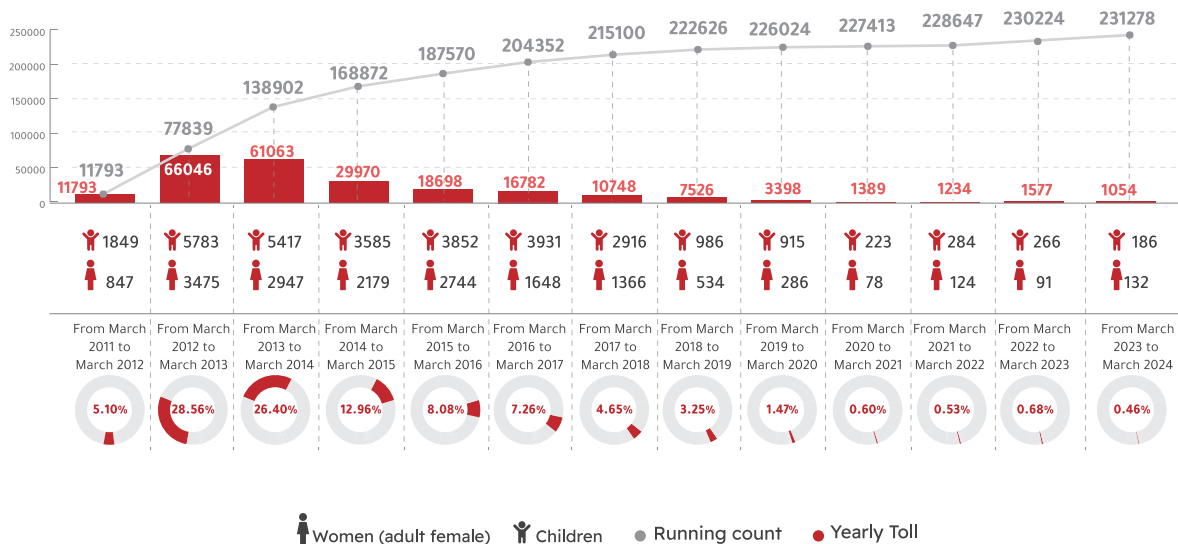
4. All armed opposition/SNA factions that have been founded since 2011, whether active or defunct, in all of their present and past areas of control.





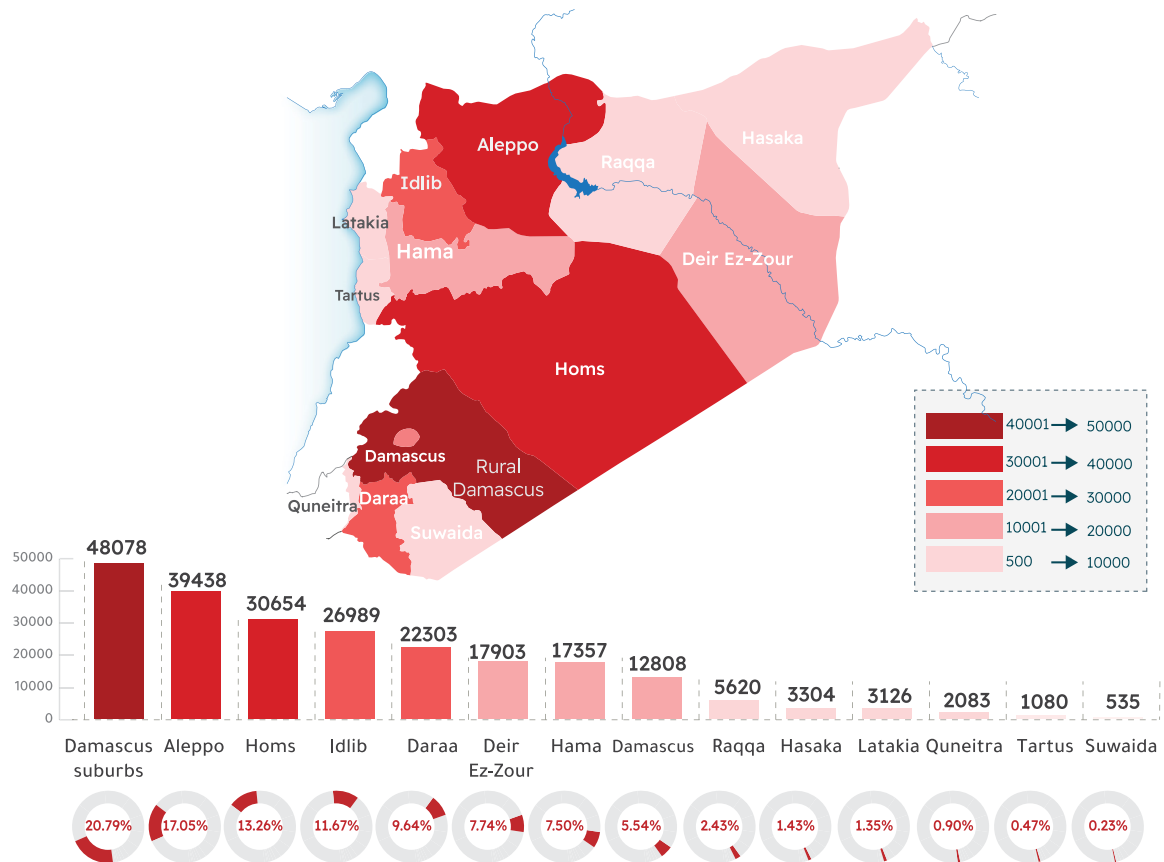
As shown on the graphs above, regime forces and their allies are responsible for the vast majority of killings, with 91 percent of all documented civilian deaths being at the hands of the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces. About three percent of all victims were killed by Russian forces following the launch of their military intervention in Syria in September 2015.

Civilian deaths by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces over the last 13 years are distributed as follows:



As shown on the graph, the highest number of civilian deaths was documented in the second year of the popular uprising (from March 2012 until March 2013), followed by the third year (from March 2013 to March 2014), accounting for 29 and 27 percent respectively. In other words, about 56 percent of all civilian deaths documented since March 2011 were killed between March 2012 and March 2014.

Civilian deaths documented since March 2011 are distributed across governorates.

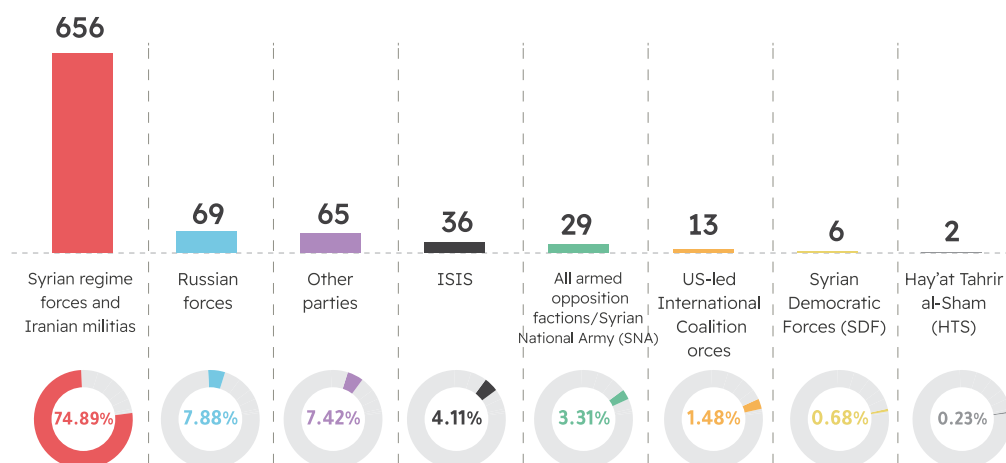


As shown above, every Syrian governorate has seen civilian deaths over the last 13 years. The governorates of Rural Damascus 'Rif Dimshaq', Aleppo, and Homs have seen most deaths accounting collectively for 52 percent of the total number, with Rural Damascus accounting for 21 percent, Aleppo for 17 percent, and Homs for 14 percent.

Deaths among medical personnel

SNHR has documented the killing of **876** medical personnel at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 up until March 2024. These are distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias: 656 medical personnel.
- Russian forces: 69 medical personnel.
- ISIS: 36 medical personnel.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): Two medical personnel.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 29 medical personnel.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): Six medical personnel.
- US-led International Coalition forces: 13 medical personnel.
- Other parties: 65 medical personnel.

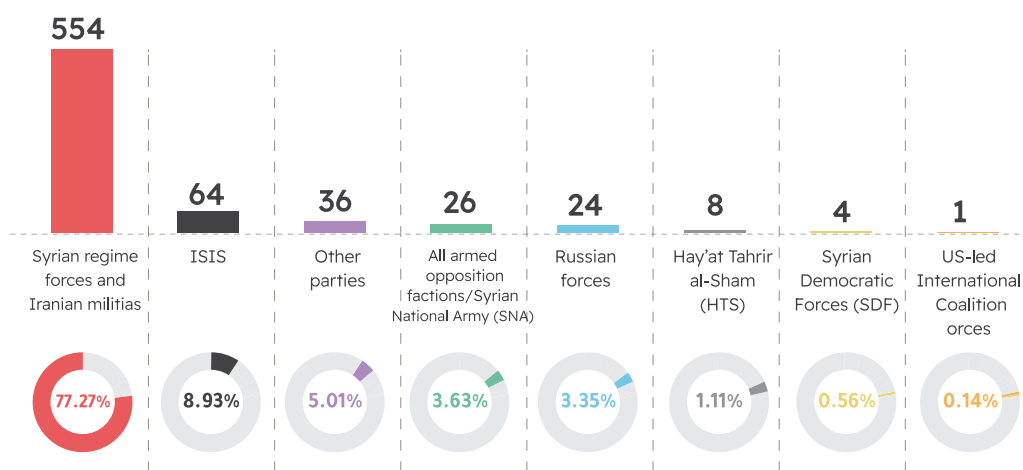


As shown on the graph, Syrian-Russian alliance forces were responsible for about 83 percent of all deaths documented among medical personnel. It should be noted that many of these medical workers were killed in bombardment of medical facilities, or while they were tending to the wounded. These high rates are another clear indicator of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces' very deliberate targeting of medical personnel and the medical facilities, where they work, many of which were destroyed in targeted attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

Deaths among media workers

SNHR has documented the killing of **717 media workers** at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 up until March 2024. These are distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias: 554 media workers.
- Russian forces: 24 media workers.
- ISIS: 64 media workers.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): Eight media workers.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 26 media workers.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): Four media workers.
- US-led International Coalition forces: One media worker.
- Other parties: 36 media workers.



As shown on the graph, Syrian-Russian alliance forces have been responsible for about 82 percent of all deaths among media workers recorded so far, divided into approximately 78 percent by regime forces and four percent by Russian forces.

2. No fewer than **156,757** arbitrarily arrested detainees/forcibly disappeared persons

Arbitrary arrests were among the first violations to be committed by the Syrian regime against civilians from the very start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. These practices expanded in parallel with the growth and geographic spread of demonstrations calling for political changes across Syria. In fact, vast numbers of arbitrary arrests have been carried out throughout the conflict and up to the current day, usually in a manner that more closely resembles an abduction than a legitimate arrest, with no judicial warrant being shown, and being simply based on reports by the regime's security apparatus.

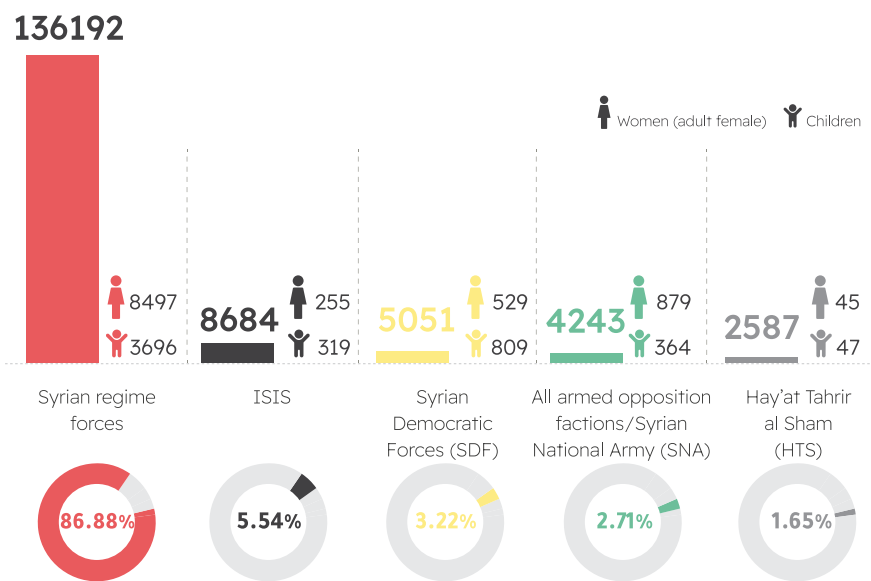
As attested by SNHR's database, about 73 percent of the people arbitrarily arrested in Syria subsequently go on to become enforced disappearance cases. The Syrian regime is responsible for about 88 percent of all arbitrary arrests recorded on our regularly updated database. Naturally, given these staggering rates of arbitrary arrest, [the number of Syrian citizens classified as missing has skyrocketed](#), so much so that it can be called a phenomenon in itself. Indeed, Syria is one of the worst countries worldwide in terms of the numbers of 'disappeared' citizens.

A host of other violations are also included under the banner of 'arbitrary arrest'- most prominently among these are enforced disappearance and various forms of torture, as well as exceptional trials that are carried out through summary and secret procedures.

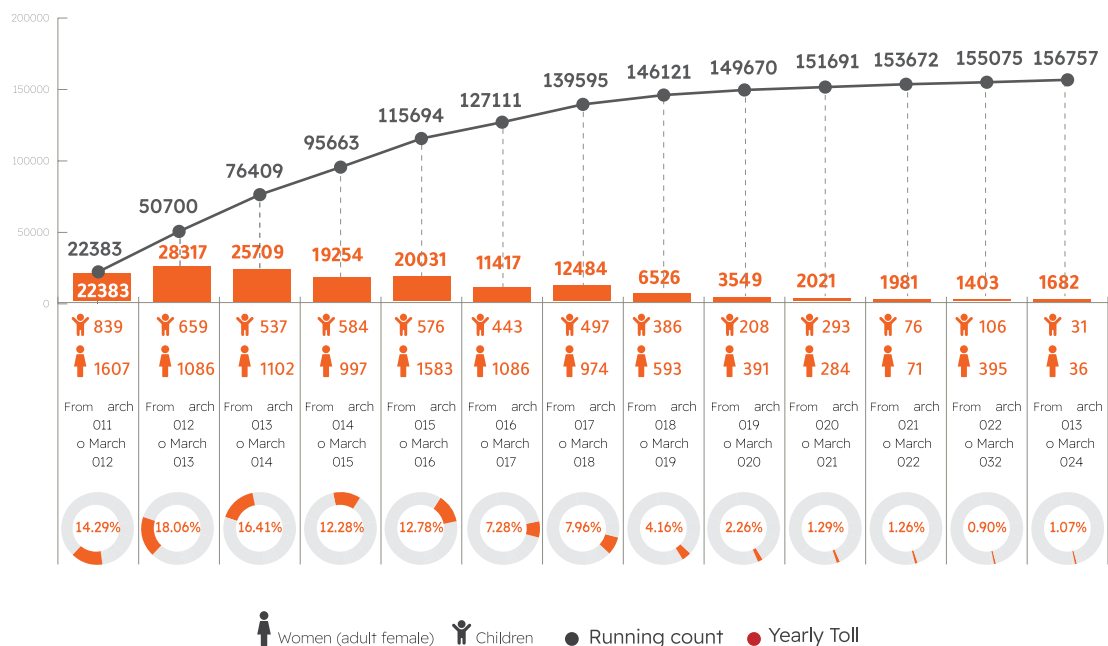
The data on arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance cases documented in Syria shows that all parties to the conflict have resorted to arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance as a mean of terrorizing the people in areas under their control and creating a sense of mass fear with the objective of consolidating control. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), extremist Islamic groups, such as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), and ISIS, and the various armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA) have all carried out practices similar to those of the regime, albeit at far lower rates and in a less systematic manner, with these practices constituting violations of the international human rights law, and, when done in the context of the armed conflict, also constituting violation of the international humanitarian law. Approximately 157,000 Syrian citizens are currently detained or forcibly disappeared in the country, with no signs that any of the parties to the conflict are willing to disclose their fate despite international calls for them to do so. This number reflects only those cases which SNHR's team has been able to document in [accordance with the criteria outlined in our methodology](#). In most cases, the arrest resembles an abduction, with the arresting forces abducting the victim without disclosing their own identity or showing any judicial warrant, making the detention more akin to a kidnapping. Thereafter, the parties responsible for the arrest usually deny responsibility, with most cases subsequently classified as enforced disappearance.

SNHR has documented that **156,757** of those arrested since March 2011, including 5,235 children and 10,205 women (adult female), are still detained and/or forcibly disappeared as of March 2024. These are distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: 136,192 individuals, including 3,696 children and 8,497 women.
- ISIS: 8,684 individuals, including 319 children and 255 women.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): 2,587 individuals, including 47 children and 45 women.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 4,243 individuals, including 364 children and 879 women.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): 5,051 individuals, including 809 children and 529 women.

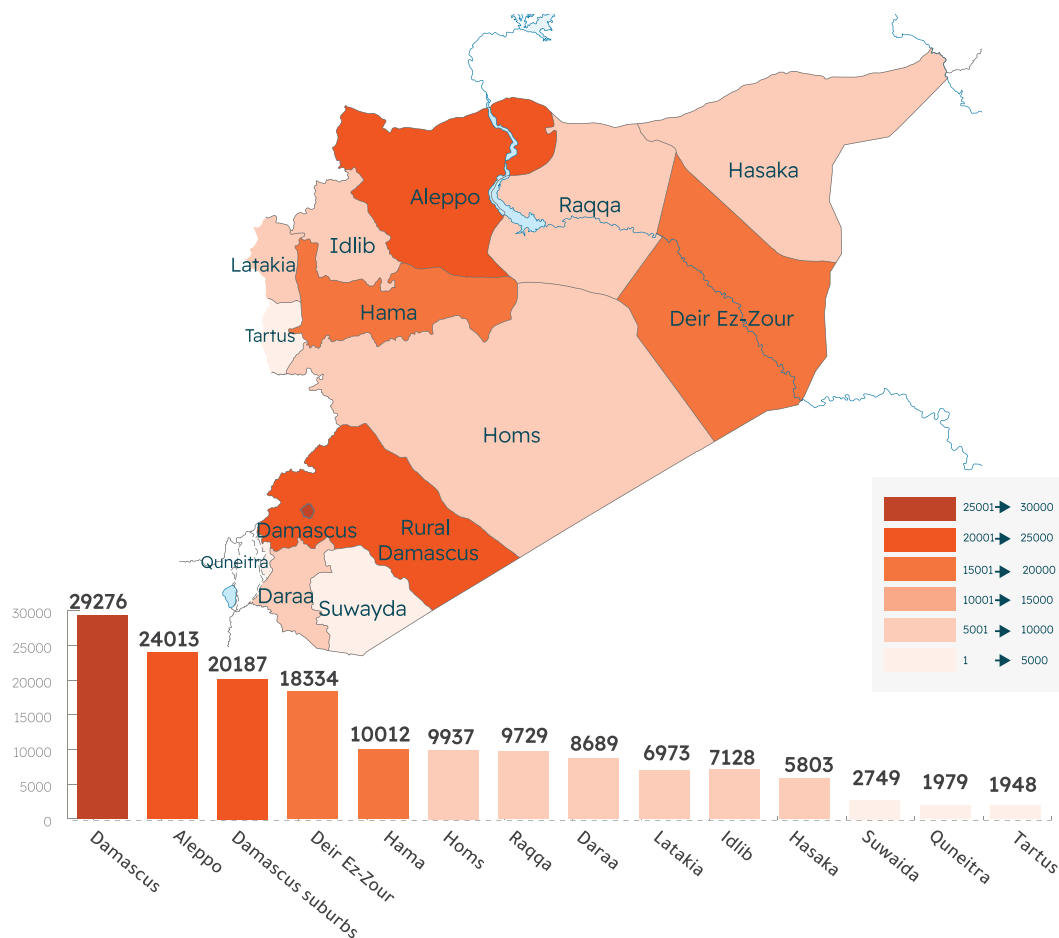


Arrests/enforced disappearances at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria that were recorded in the last 13 years, between March 2011 and March 2024, are distributed as follows:



The first three years of the popular uprising saw the highest proportion of arbitrary arrests, with many of those detained during this period and since still being imprisoned and/or forcibly disappeared. In total, the first three years of the uprising accounted for 49 percent of all arbitrary arrests, due to the large numbers and wide geographic extent of the protests. In particular, the second year (from March 2012 and March 2013) saw the most arrests carried out in a single year, accounting for about 19 percent, followed by the third year with about 17 percent.

Arrests/enforced disappearances at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria that were recorded in the last 13 years, between March 2011 and March 2024, are distributed according to the governorate where the arrest took place as follows:



As shown above, Damascus governorate saw the highest proportion of arrests of people who are still under arrest/forcibly disappeared, accounting for about 19 percent of the total, followed by Aleppo governorate with 16 percent, Rural Damascus with 13 percent, and Deir Ez-Zour with 12 percent.

3. At least 15,334 deaths due to torture documented, with victims including 199 children and 115 women

Torture is organically related to the process of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance, but is not solely restricted to those multi-faceted crimes. Since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011, the torture practices incorporated by the regime's security apparatus have exponentially expanded. In effect, the regime's security forces can detain, degrade, abuse, torture, and, if they choose, release any Syrian citizen, since they possess unrestricted powers, thanks to which it is impossible to hold any of them accountable. In cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, which can last for years, the levels of torture increase and become more compounded as time passes, potentially leading to death under torture or due to medical negligence, which is a form of torture in and of itself.

The torture practices inflicted by the regime's security services can be seen across all Syrian governorates. This is not unusual since the system used by the regime's security authorities is based on subservience to a centralized authority that practices deliberate, calculated, and unified torture policies. The fact that hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been and are still subjected to horrific torture, which has been fatal in thousands of cases, only further confirms that this is a deliberate, calculated policy by the Syrian regime which constitutes a crime against humanity against the Syrian people, invalidating any attempt at claiming a legitimate right to power. In theory, since protecting the Syrian people is a fundamental part of the ruling authority's responsibilities, ensuring the people's safety and wellbeing should always be paramount and should rank far higher than protecting any ruler. In reality, however, the Syrian regime has failed to launch even one investigation or to hold even one officer accountable for the unspeakably horrific violations by any of its personnel even after the deaths of at least 15,334 Syrian citizens due to torture in recent years. Indeed, as we have observed, some of the officers and individuals involved in torture practices have been promoted as a reward for their loyalty, implicating themselves along with the regime in the systemic practice of torture.

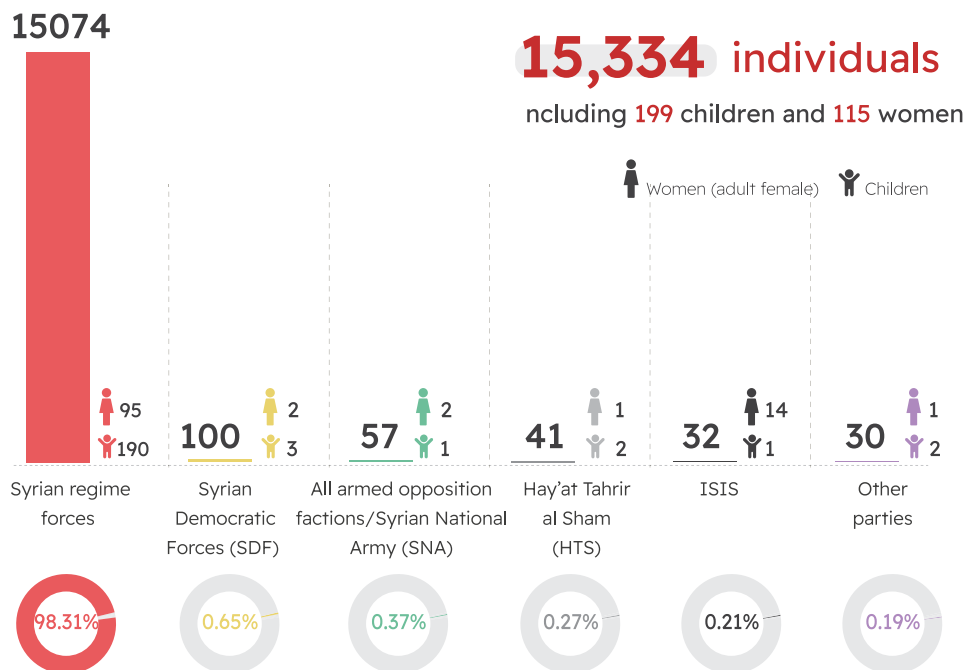
While all the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria have practiced torture against their opponents,⁵ the Syrian regime has been by far the most prolific and lethal practitioner of torture among all the parties and controlling forces in Syria over the last 13 years. Today, over 155,000 people are still detained and/or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria according to the information contained on SNHR databases. The Syrian regime is responsible for 88 percent of all enforced disappearances, with the overwhelming majority of these detainees being political prisoners detained in the context of their support for the popular uprising, with all of them having been subjected to one or multiple form(s) of torture over the years of their incarceration. It is important to remember that there is no time limit or other restriction on the torture inflicted on detainees, which starts from the very first moment after each victim's arrest, and is carried out without any constraints or restrictions that can be, even remotely, described as 'legal'. What follows arrest is constant suffering under the regime's systemic and vast machinery of torture of various forms. We have spoken in detail about the issue of torture [in our annual reports on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#). Probably the worst aspect of the issue of torture, especially given the massive number of documented torture violations, as shown in graphs below, is the fact that it continues to be perpetrated with no accountability at all for the perpetrators, even at the lowest levels. This impunity has emboldened the perpetrators and led to increasing levels of torture in detention centers over the years, so much so that they have reached a level where the use of torture is openly flaunted.

5. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, January 31). The Most Notable Hay'at Tahrir al Sham Violations Since the Establishment of Jabhat al Nusra to Date. <https://snhr.org/blog/2022/01/31/57274/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, February 10). The Most Notable ISIS Violations against Syrian Society and ISIS' Contribution to Distorting the Popular Uprising Calling for Freedom and Dignity. <https://snhr.org/blog/2022/02/10/57313/>

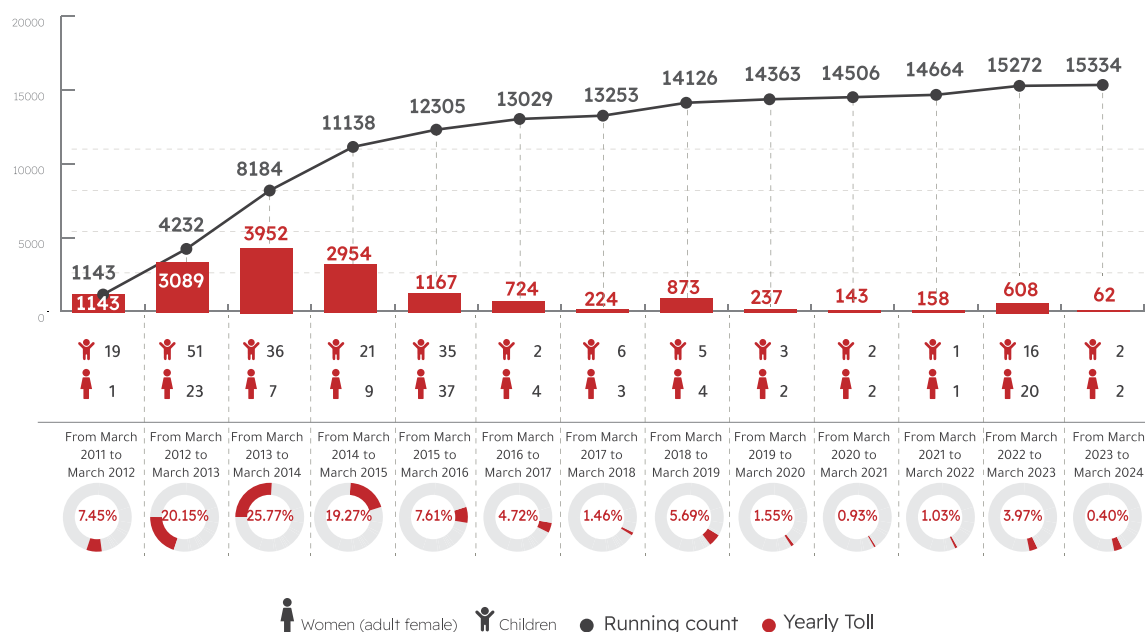
SNHR has documented no fewer than **15,334 deaths** due to torture, including of 199 children and 115 women (adult female) at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 up until March 2024. These are distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: 15,074 individuals, including 190 children and 95 women.
- ISIS: 32 individuals, including one child and 14 women.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): 41 individuals, including two children and one woman.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 57 individuals, including one child and two women.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): 100 individuals, including three children and two women.
- Other parties: 30 individuals, including two children and one woman.

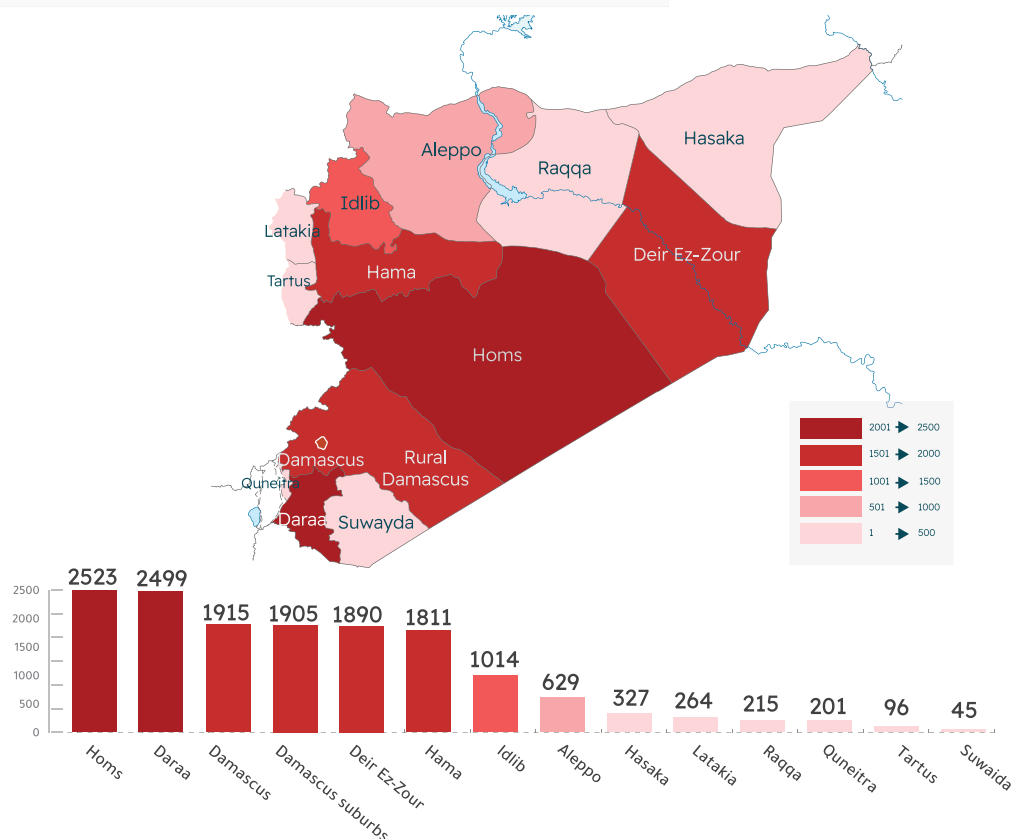


As shown above, the Syrian regime has far surpassed all other parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in the use of torture in its detention centers and in the resultant numbers of deaths due to torture. In fact, the Syrian regime has been responsible for about 99 percent of all deaths due to torture.

Deaths due to torture recorded in the past 13 years are distributed as follows;



Victims who died due to torture (approximately 15,334 deaths) between March 2011 and March 2024 are distributed according to their governorate of origin as follows:



As the map above shows, the largest proportion of victims who died due to torture hail from the governorate of Daraa, followed by Homs, then Damascus, with these three governorates accounting for 17, 16, and 12 percent of torture deaths respectively. We have documented many cases of the Syrian regime deliberately directing torture against victims from certain areas known for rising against the regime as a form of collective retaliation.

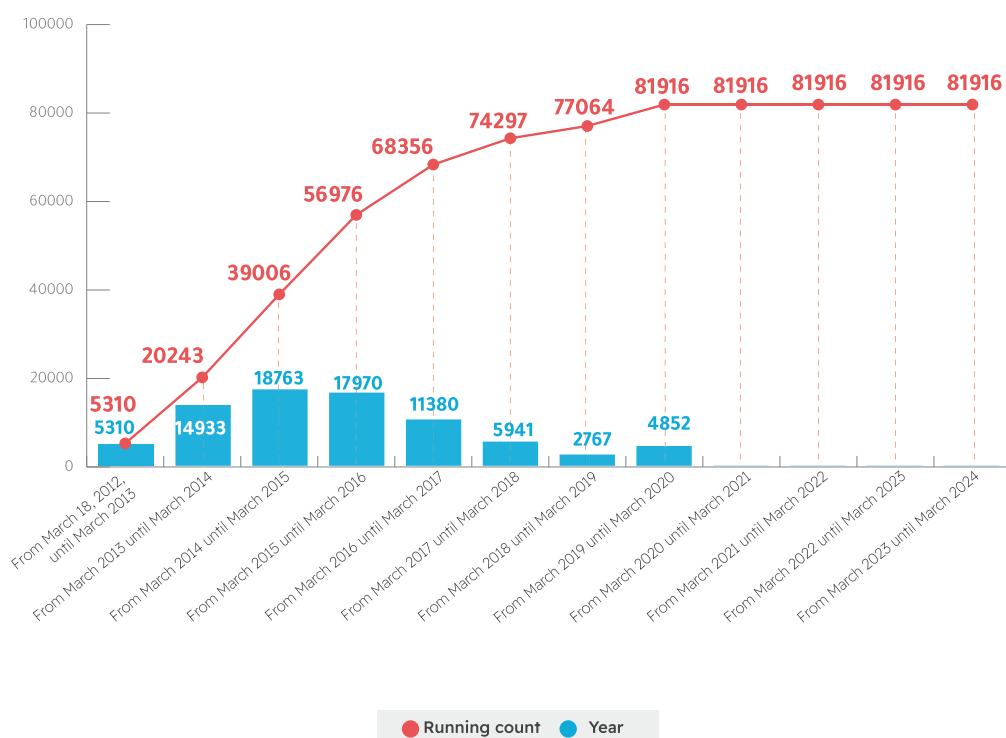
4. Use of four weapons: barrel bombs, chemical weapons, cluster munitions, and incendiary munitions

A. Barrel bombs: At least 81,916 barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian regime on Syria

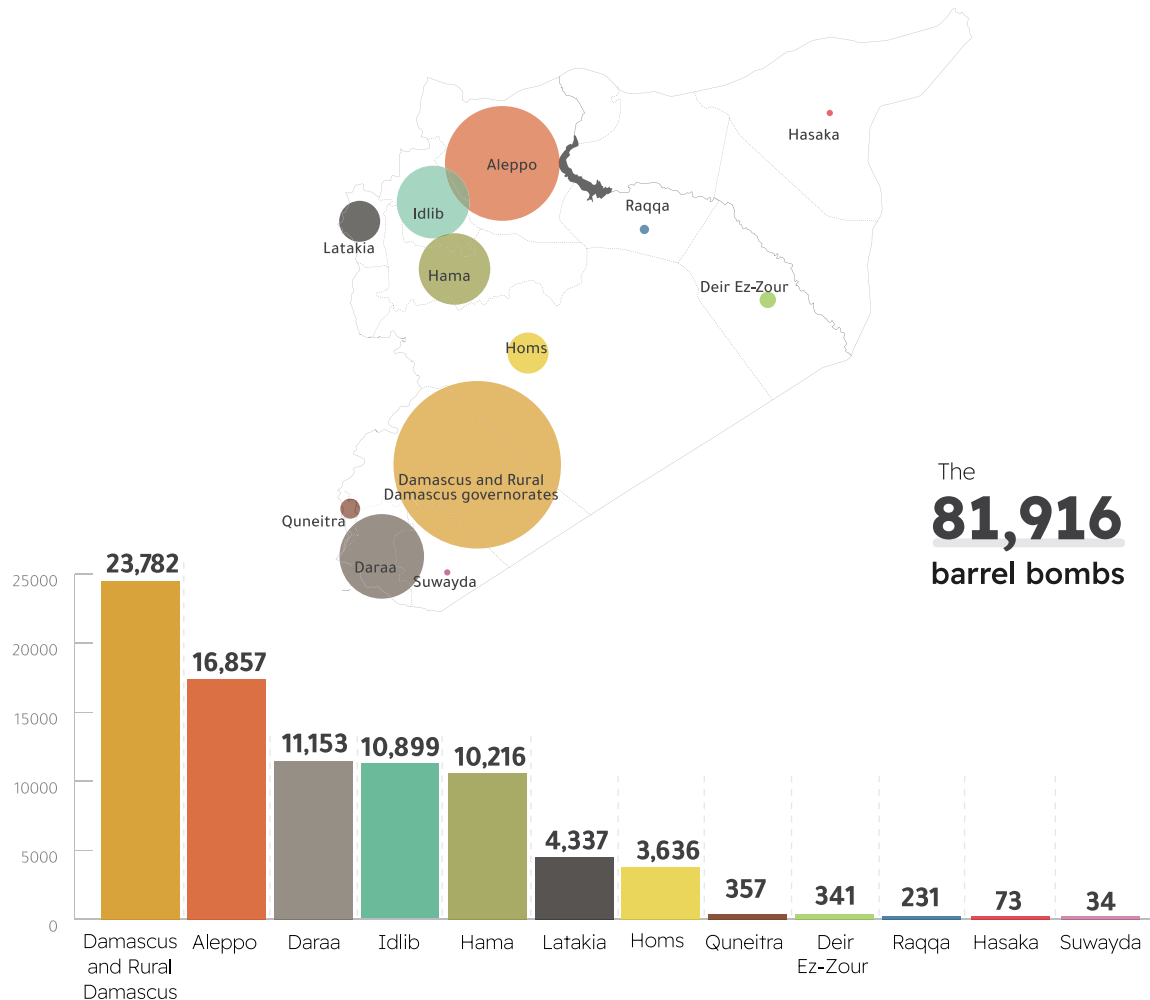
Barrel bombs were among the improvised weapons most prolifically deployed by the Syrian regime in its war against the country's people following the start of the Syrian uprising in March 2011. Barrel bombs, which have also been the least costly aerial weapon used by the regime, are known for their highly indiscriminate nature as they free-fall from the planes or helicopter gunships they're thrown out of, as well as their terrible destructiveness. Moreover, in our continued monitoring, we noticed that regime forces notably used this weapon against certain areas under the control of other parties as part of certain offensives aimed at recapturing control of those areas. According to SNHR's database, [the first documented use of barrel bombs](#) dates back to July 18, 2012, in [Dael city in northern Daraa governorate](#). We have released monthly and special reports on the use of barrel bombs by regime forces and the resulting civilian deaths. In our most recent extensive report on the subject, released in April 2021, we outlined the manufacturing process of barrel bombs and listed the locations of the most prominent facilities where these lethal improvised weapons are manufactured. In some cases, we also documented that regime forces added chemical substances and incendiary ammunition to barrel bombs.

SNHR has documented that Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes and helicopters have dropped approximately 81,916 barrel bombs since March 2012 up until March 2024, killing no fewer than 11,087 civilians, including 1,821 children and 1,780 women (adult female).

Barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian regime are distributed by year as follows:



The 81,916 barrel bombs deployed by the regime are also distributed across governorates as follows:



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

B. Chemical weapons: 222 chemical weapons attacks documented

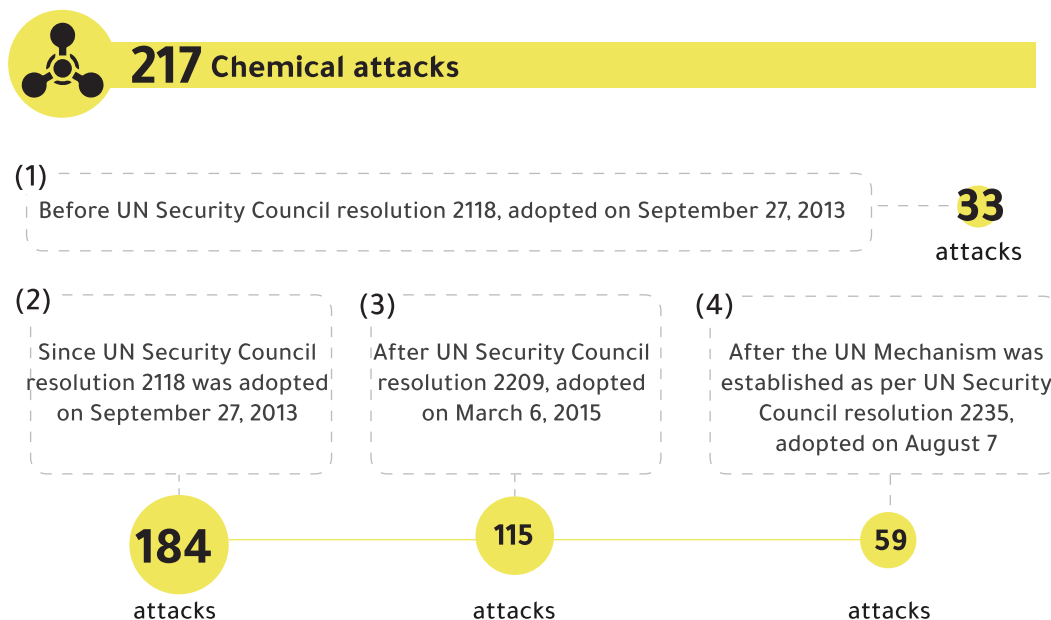
The constant culture of impunity has emboldened the Syrian regime to continue perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes, which have involved its using a extensive array of weapons against the Syrian people, including weapons of mass destruction, specifically chemical weapons (CWs). Particularly in the case of chemical weapons, the impunity enjoyed by the Syrian regime means that the regime has been willing to use this weapon repeatedly and in a widespread manner, despite the UN Security Council's adoption of three resolutions - 2118,⁶ 2209,⁷ and 2235⁸ - 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 2024, we have documented no fewer than 222 CW 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 weapons 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:



6. United Nations Security Council, [resolution 2118/2013](#)

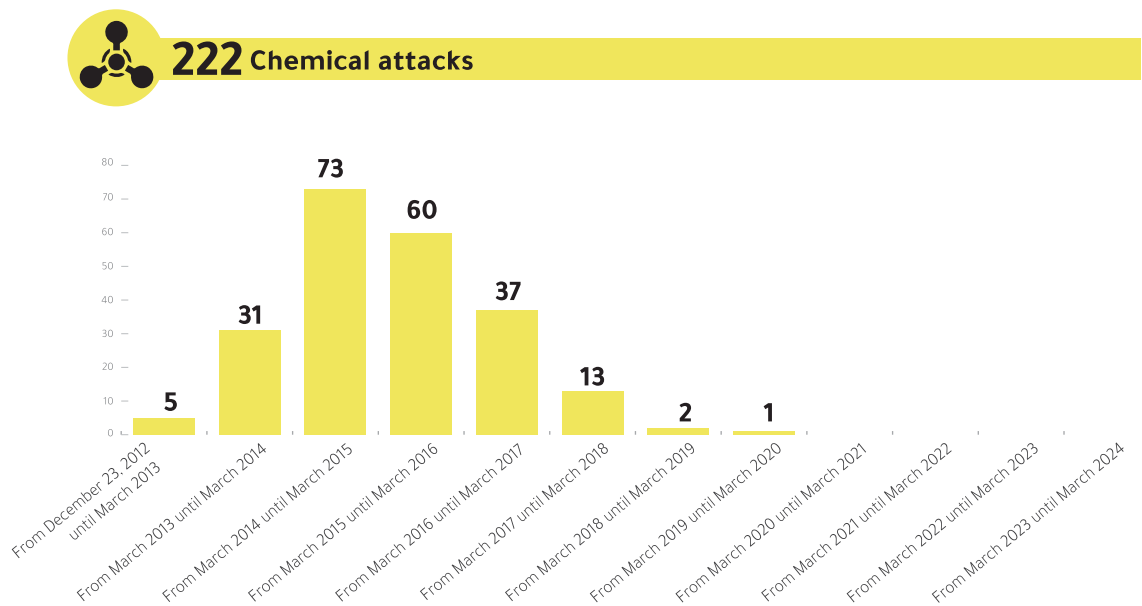
7. United Nations Security Council, [resolution 2209/2014](#)

8. United Nations Security Council, [resolution 2235/2015](#)

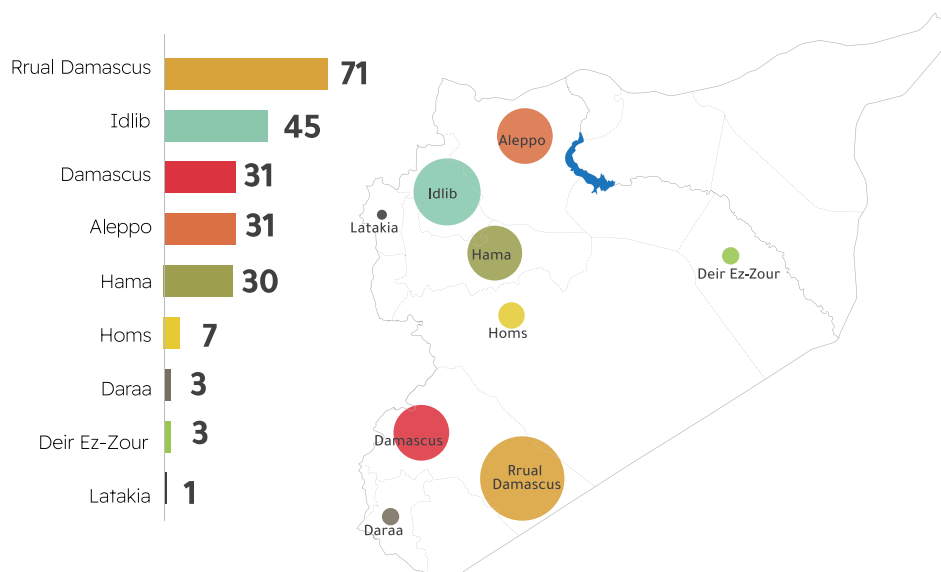
B. ISIS carried out five chemical weapons attacks in Aleppo that violated the three Security Council resolutions: 2118, 2209, and 2235.

In total, these 222 chemical attacks have resulted in the deaths of 1,514 individuals: 1,413 civilians; including 214 children and 262 women (adult female); 94 armed opposition fighters, and seven captured Syrian regime troops who were being held in an armed opposition prison. All the fatalities resulted from 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 years, 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 CW attacks taking place between March 2014 and March 2015, approximately 27 percent taking place between March 2015 and March 2016, and approximately 17 percent 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 them took place, followed by Idlib with roughly 21 percent, and then the two governorates of Damascus and Aleppo with roughly 14 percent each.

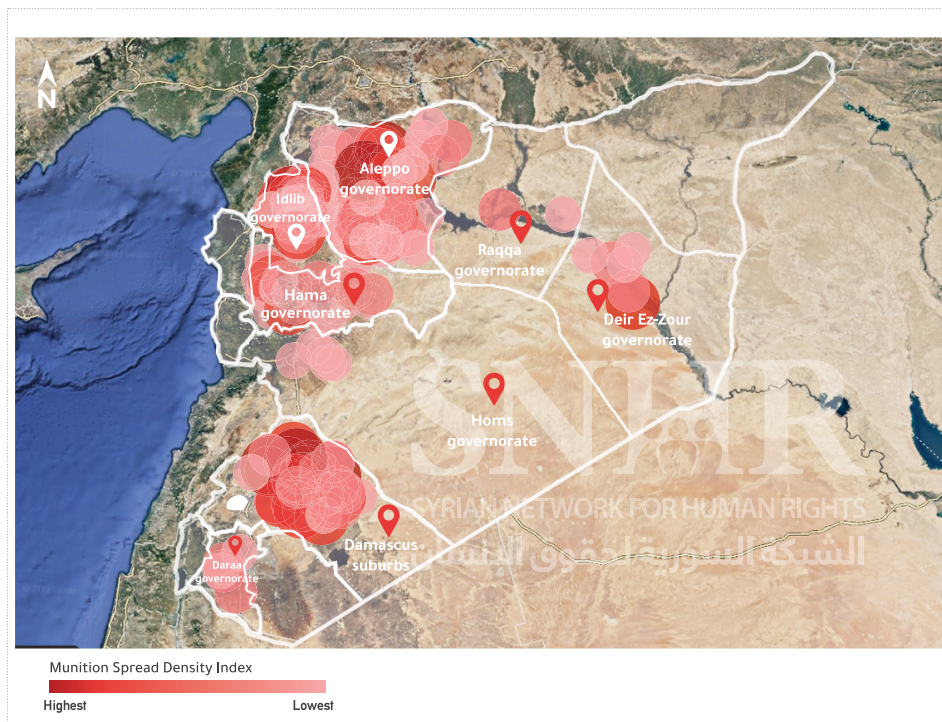
C. Cluster munitions: 497 attacks documented

For the past 12 years, different Syrian governorates have seen heavy and repeated use of internationally outlawed cluster munitions, firstly by the Syrian regime, then by Russian forces. Indeed, hundreds of cluster bomb attacks have targeted civilian objects, including agricultural lands and populated areas, resulting in civilian deaths and injuries among Syrian citizens. According to SNHR's database on cluster munitions attacks, the first documented use of these lethal weapons took place on July 10, 2012, when fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes targeted Shurilin 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 these weapons after Russia launched its military operation in Syria on September 30, 2015. These attacks have been carried out using missiles or shells carrying dozens or hundreds of bomblets, which are either dropped from warplanes or launched from launcher platforms believed to be stationed on vessels in the Mediterranean Sea or via rocket launchers.

Cluster munitions are particularly dangerous because of their long-term consequences which 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 the 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 are still scattered across Syria where they have effectively been turned into live landmines that can kill or maim civilians, and cause serious injuries when touched or even when someone approaches them. These lethal cluster munitions remnants and bomblets pose a serious threat to future generations of the Syrian people. SNHR has published a number of maps of Syrian governorates⁹ that illustrate certain sites which are probably contaminated with cluster munitions remnants, so as to enable locals to avoid them. These maps, however, reflect only the bare minimum of the real scope of these submunitions' dispersion. The maps show the areas most densely targeted in cluster munitions attacks which saw the highest numbers of the resultant civilian deaths

Below is a map showing sites that were contaminated by cluster munitions remnants in Syria in the wake of attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces between July 2012 and March 2024:

9. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, January 31). Cluster Munitions Remnants are an Open-Ended Threat to the Lives of Syria's Future Generations.



SNHR has documented no fewer than **497 attacks** involving the use of cluster munitions. These attacks, which were carried out by Syrian-Russian alliances forces, separately or jointly, since the first documented use of this type of weapon in July 2012 and March 2024, are distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: 252 attacks.
- Russian forces: 237 attacks.
- Russian/Syrian attacks: Eight attacks.

We have documented the deaths of **1,053 civilians**, including 394 children and 219 women (adult female) as a result of cluster munition attacks in Syria, since the first use of cluster munitions documented on our database in July 2012 and March 2024. The death toll resulting from cluster munition attacks is distributed according to the perpetrator party:

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

As we noted above, at least hundreds of cluster submunitions in Syria have effectively turned into landmines. To this day, we continue to regularly document deaths or maiming of Syrian citizens caused by the explosion of leftover cluster submunitions. As of March 2024, we recorded the deaths of no fewer than **385 civilians**, including 125 children and 31 women, caused by the explosion of cluster submunitions left by older cluster munitions attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces since the first documented use of these weapons in July 2012.

D. Incendiary weapons: 181 attacks involving the use of 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 skin, it can cause horrendous deep burns that reach the bones, leaving horrific scars, if not causing death. Meanwhile when used against agricultural areas and residential buildings, these weapons, due to their nature and that of the flammable substances they contain which can burn for prolonged periods of time, can also cause fires that damage 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 any 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 Syrian territory.

As SNHR's database shows, we have documented no fewer than 181 attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons against civilian residential areas between March 2011 and March 2024. These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: 41 attacks.
- Russian forces: 125 attacks.
- US-led International Coalition forces: five attacks against residential neighborhoods in Raqqa city.

5. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

Over the course of the 13-year conflict in Syria, [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 have not been limited to bombardment, with dozens of vital civilian facilities also being repurposed as military posts or detention centers by the parties to the conflict in areas under their control, which, in turn, made these facilities viable targets for other parties to the conflict. Denying civilians use of these vital facilities and services has had and will continue to have dire ramifications, both in the short-term and the long-term, one of which is through driving residents to flee to safer, more stable areas that provide those services.

Since March 2011, we have recorded no fewer than 897 attacks on medical facilities, and 1,453 attacks on places of worship. We also documented damage to 1,675 schools, some of which were targeted in multiple attacks. According to our documentation, Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces have been responsible for approximately 86 percent of these attacks.



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

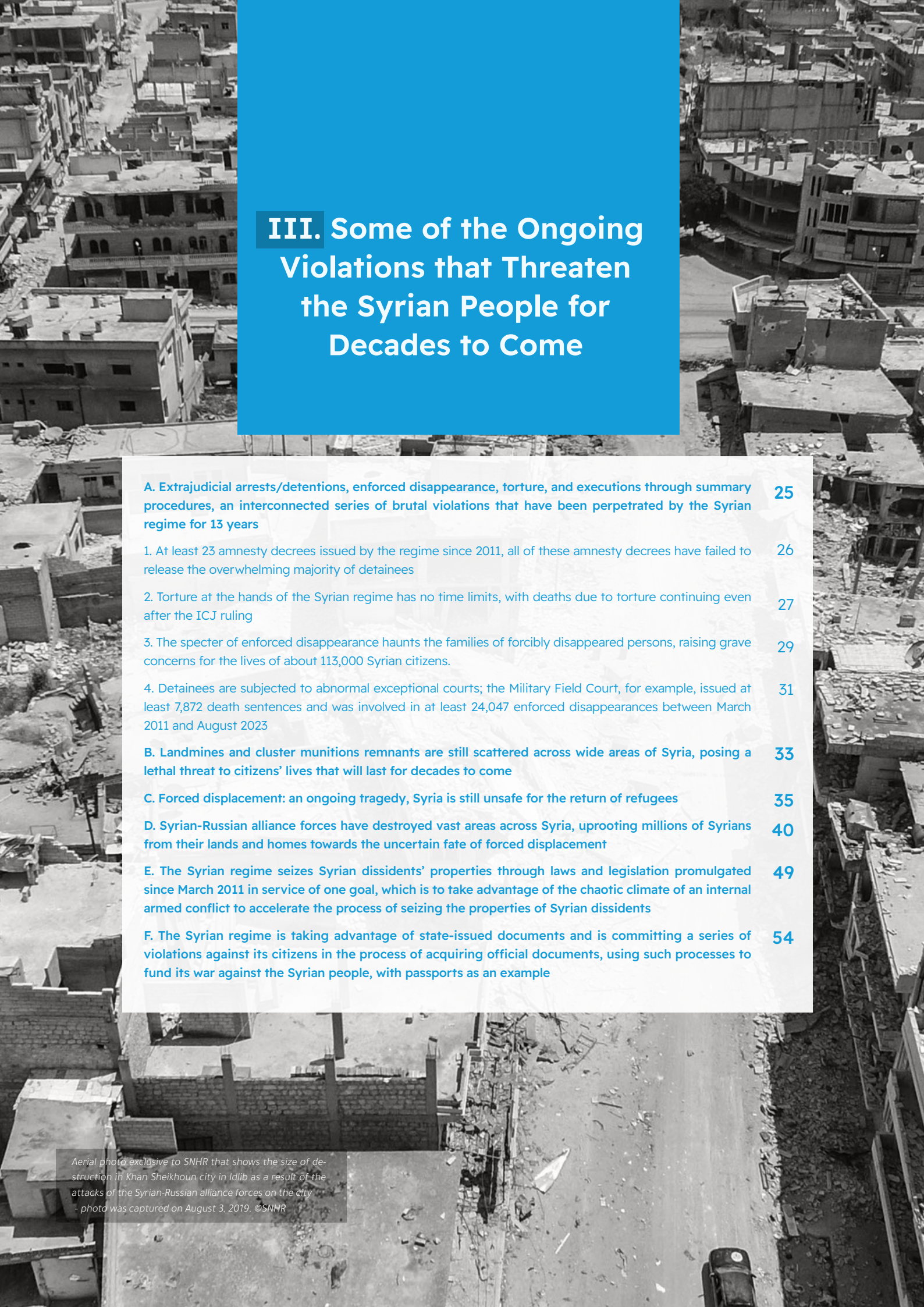
The violations perpetrated first and foremost by the Syrian regime, and secondly by the other parties to the conflict have led to the displacement of half the Syrian population either as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees. Added to this, tens of thousands more people are seeking asylum abroad as the violations continue, and, even more dishearteningly, relations are being normalized with those responsible for perpetrating these violations. Such developments eliminate any prospect of a return to Syria for refugees in the near future.

Forced displacement has been a part of a wider series of violations that affect millions of Syrians. This includes destruction of homes and confiscation and pillaging of properties. Over the past years, we have recorded many incidents in which vast convoys of people who had been forcibly displaced from their homes were then targeted for bombardment as they walked or drove along roads while fleeing during this heartbreaking process. Moreover, in the past two years, we documented a significant rise in the number of attacks targeting camps housing internally displaced people (IDPs), 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.

Most 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, as well as by declining levels of support and the steady dwindling in recent years of the already meagre amount of humanitarian assistance delivered via the cross-border mechanism. The February 6 earthquakes in 2023 only exacerbated the already-dire situation of the displaced in the affected areas where needs have been compounded.

[The UN Refugee Agency \(UNHCR\) estimates that](#) roughly 13.4 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 6.7 million refugees have been externally displaced, with the overwhelming majority seeking refuge in countries neighboring Syria.



III. Some of the Ongoing Violations that Threaten the Syrian People for Decades to Come

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4. Detainees are subjected to abnormal exceptional courts; the Military Field Court, for example, issued at least 7,872 death sentences and was involved in at least 24,047 enforced disappearances between March 2011 and August 2023	31
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Aerial photo exclusive to SNHR that shows the size of destruction in Khan Sheikhoun city in Idlib as a result of the attacks of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the city - photo was captured on August 3, 2019. ©SNHR

A. Extrajudicial arrests/detentions, enforced disappearance, torture, and executions through summary procedures, an interconnected series of brutal violations that have been perpetrated by the Syrian regime for 13 years

There are a number of issues related to the trinity of arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture, which are, in one way or another, an extension or outcome of those three fundamental violations. Indeed, SNHR has extensively studied and analyzed those issues, involving continuous and cumulative monitoring and documentation, for 13 years. To that end, the issues outlined below are particular to the Syrian regime. This is the same regime that is responsible for about 87 percent of all arbitrary arrests in Syria since March 2011, about 86 percent of all enforced disappearances, and about 99 percent of all deaths due to torture. All the conclusions we have reached point to the regime's responsibility for arrest/enforced disappearance/torture practices that have been carried out in a systematic and widespread manner, amounting to crimes against humanity.

The entire process of unlawful detention/arbitrary arrest is an interconnected series of actions which constitute multiple forms of torture that can potentially lead to death. Most unlawful detention/arbitrary arrests carried out by the regime are carried out without the involvement of the judiciary, with the regime's Public Prosecution playing a merely nominal role at various stages, which is limited to issuing belated arrest warrants. That is to say that any investigations conducted by the prosecution are done at the request of the security apparatus and not vice versa. In these arrests, the Syrian regime does not adhere to the arrest conditions specified in the Syrian Constitutions and Syrian laws.¹⁰ These 'arrests' are carried out with no legal cause, being more akin to abductions. Usually, detainees immediately become forcibly disappeared persons following their arrest, as they are transferred to one of the many detention centers affiliated with the security apparatus, where they are denied any opportunity to contact the outside world.

Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance carried out by regime forces are by no means haphazard or random in nature, nor are they carried out on an individual level. Rather, enforced disappearance has been adopted by the Syrian regime as a calculated and deliberate policy with the objective of oppression and control, with the planning behind this policy involving the highest echelons of power within the state and its security apparatus, meaning that all of the regime's security and military agencies have been implicated in practicing enforced disappearance, along with the judiciary (which reports to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defense). The judiciary has failed to take any protective measures to defend either forcibly disappeared persons, or even the detainees referred to it, who have been forcibly disappeared from central/civilian prisons by the regime's security agencies after being referred to the judiciary. This is particularly true in the case of [the Counterterrorism Court](#) in Damascus. In fact, the judiciary has itself been an integral instrument in enforced disappearance practices, such as those related to [Military Field Courts](#), through the secret sentences issued against thousands of forcibly disappeared persons.

10. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, November 2). [At Least 193 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in October 2023, Including 13 Children and Four Women.](#)

The next section briefly outlines a number of issues related to the trinity of arbitrary arrest/detention, enforced disappearance, and torture:

1. At least 23 amnesty decrees issued by the regime since 2011, all of these amnesty decrees have failed to release the overwhelming majority of detainees

Based on our rigorous monitoring of the laws and decrees promulgated by the Syrian regime, we feel confident in asserting that the regime issues an average of one or two amnesty decrees per year. SNHR has counted a total of 23 amnesty decrees issued by the regime between March 2011 and November 20, 2023. While this figure might seem relatively high, all these amnesty decrees have failed to secure the release of more than a miniscule proportion of the detainees and forcibly disappeared persons imprisoned in the regime's detention centers, which currently hold over 135,000 detainees and forcibly disappeared persons, with these detainees' details being recorded on SNHR's database. On November 16, 2022, we released [an extensive report](#) analyzing the amnesty decrees promulgated by the Syrian regime since March 2011, up until October 2022. We have found that all of these amnesty decrees had led to the release of only 7,351 of these arbitrarily arrested detainees, with the regime still holding approximately 135,253 detainees/forcibly disappeared persons. That is to say, all of these amnesty decrees have secured the release of no more than five percent of all those detained and forcibly disappeared by the regime since 2011, while the regime's machine of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance has never ceased its operations, [as shown in our monthly reports on arrests and detentions in Syria](#), and in other news stories and statements. It is clear then that amnesty decrees only lead to the release of an extremely limited number of detainees, while the total figure is steadily increasing, given the systematic and centralized arbitrary arrest practices still being carried out by the regime's security agencies, army forces, and even all of the local militias.

The last two years (2022-2023) saw the promulgation of four amnesty decrees by the regime. One quickly notices the short periods of time, of no more than a few months, between the issuance of these amnesty decrees. In this process of issuing successive amnesty decrees, it becomes apparent that the regime is trying to promote a distorted image to influence public opinion and mislead the international community by claiming that it is indeed releasing detainees. Simultaneously, the regime is also trying to accomplish domestic goals related to the decaying state of its overcrowded prisons. That is to say that the regime is releasing more actual criminals and contravening its punitive laws just to relieve the pressure on its prisons, to such a degree that in many Syrian areas today, criminals have no hesitation in committing crimes knowing that even if they're caught and imprisoned, they'll quickly be released due to being included in any upcoming amnesty decree. The high frequency of the regime's issuance of these amnesty decrees has popularized and perpetuated this mindset among criminals, who are their main beneficiaries. We have released many reports analyzing these decrees from a legal and human rights standpoint¹¹ and announcing the findings of our monitoring of the implementation of those amnesty decrees in regime detention centers. We can confirm that all of these amnesty decrees have had no tangible or noticeable outcome in terms of securing the release of unjustly imprisoned detainees and forcibly disappeared persons from regime detention centers.

11. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2020, May 15). Two Months Since Issuing Amnesty Decree, the Syrian Regime Released Only 96 of Nearly 130,000 Detainees and Arrested 113 More. <https://snhr.org/blog/2020/05/15/54991/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2021, July 15). The Syrian Regime Has Released 81 Individuals Under Amnesty Decree No. 13 of May 2021 and Arrested Nearly 176 Since Its Issuance. <https://snhr.org/blog/2021/07/15/56546/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, May 27) [After Nearly a Month, the Syrian Regime Has Released Only 527 Detainees Under Decree 7/2022 and Continues to Detain Around 132,000 Others.](#)

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2020, May 15). [Amnesty Decree No. 36 of 2023 Excludes Political Prisoners.](#)

2. Torture at the hands of the Syrian regime has no time limits, with deaths due to torture continuing even after the ICJ ruling

Torture has been practiced in Syria with the same frequency and using the same methods since 2011. We do not believe, nor do we see any indicator or hope that it will be stopped by the Syrian regime or that it will end without a complete political change of the country's leadership, with the regime never ordering or carrying out any serious investigation or engaging in any efforts to hold those involved in practicing torture accountable for their actions. Regime forces inflict various types of torture in their detention centers which vary in their severity and brutality. Moreover, torture practices are so widespread and systemic that almost every former detainee has been subjected to one or multiple forms of torture. To this day, we are still documenting new cases of barbaric torture, and deaths due to torture, and we are seriously concerned for the fate of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons.

Even the arrest process itself, which is in reality closer to a violent abduction, is a form of torture. Additionally, torture in security branches and detention centers is not limited to a certain range or level or to certain individuals for committing certain acts. That is to say that torture is an open-ended practice in regime detention centers that last throughout the duration of the detainee's detention which may continue for years. Torture often reaches its most brutal levels during the interrogation of detainees, with the aim of extracting confessions, with these coerced, fabricated confessions then cited as evidence in charges against the detainee, and used to justify sentences issued in one of the regime's extraordinary courts. This has been the case with all sentences issued against political detainees by the Counterterrorism Court and the State Security Court, as well as by other courts. As such, these sentences are wholly invalid since they are based on false accusations of crimes that were not committed by the detainee in question. The overwhelming majority of these detainees go on to be classified as forcibly disappeared. Enforced disappearance is, in and of itself, another form of torture since it entails completely cutting the detainee off from the outside world, including their family, friends, and lawyer, which inflicts an unimaginable psychological and emotional trauma on both the prisoner and their loved ones throughout the entire period of enforced disappearance.

As we have constantly reiterated, a detainee can be subjected to multiple and varied torture methods in one torture session. SNHR previously [released a detailed report on the torture methods systemically used in regime detention centers](#), along with a guidebook, which drew upon studying and analyzing hundreds of accounts by former prisoners interviewed by SNHR that documented those accounts of the torture they experienced over the years in regime detention centers - mainly at the hands of the four regime security authorities: the Military Intelligence Directorate, Air Force Intelligence Directorate, General Intelligence Directorate, and Political Security Directorate, as well as in the regime's vast network of military prisons, secret or 'informal' detention centers, and military hospitals. We have categorized those torture methods into eight main types, with every type including several torture methods, reaching a total of 83.¹² Those types are:

12. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, October 10). [The Syrian Regime is Accused of Killing 15,051 Individuals, Including 190 Children and 94 Women, Under Torture in Its Detention Centers Since March 2011, While Nearly 136,000 Remain Forcibly Disappeared.](#)

- Physical torture: 41 methods.
- Medical negligence and imprisonment conditions: Six methods.
- Sexual violence: Eight methods.
- Psychological torture and degradation: 11 methods.
- Forced Labor.
- Torture at military hospitals: 11 methods.
- Dissociation
- Stages of execution: Four methods.

The COI has documented the Syrian regime's practices of torture, describing them as crimes against humanity and genocide.¹³ Those practices have also been documented by human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch (HRW)¹⁴ and Amnesty International.¹⁵ As we have reiterated previously, there is extensive and irrefutable evidence that the Syrian regime's torture practices are part of a calculated and central policy that has led to the deaths of at least approximately 15,000 Syrians, which as such constitutes a crime against humanity.¹⁶

Drawing upon the abundance of reports and evidence proving the Syrian regime's violations of the [UN Convention Against Torture](#), the Netherlands and Canada, upholding their obligations as members of the Convention, have filed a case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against the Syrian regime for failing to uphold its obligation under the Convention. On Tuesday, October 10, 2023, the ICJ held the first public hearing session on the case, focusing on the requests submitted by The Netherlands and Canada to indicate provisional measures on the Syrian regime to immediately end torture, in order to protect potential victims, as the trial of the Syrian regime is still underway.

According to the [court session's transcript](#), the case draws upon a number of UN sources, as well as on data provided by SNHR which was cited as a source 14 times, while the COI was cited 24 times. [On October 11, we released a statement outlining the key developments emerging from this session.](#)

[On November 16, 2023, the Hague-based ICJ issued an order](#) to indicate the provisional measures requested by Canada and The Netherlands on the Application of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment (Canada and The Netherlands Vs. the Syrian Arab Republic). In it, the ICJ requested that the Syrian Arab Republic undertake a number of provisional measures in accordance with its obligations to the Convention Against Torture. As specified in the court documents, the Syrian Arab Republic was to "take all measures within its power to prevent acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and ensure that its officials, as well as any organizations or persons which may be subject to its control, direction or influence, do not commit any acts of torture or other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." In addition, the document continued, the Syrian Arab Republic "shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of any evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment."

13. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). (2023, July 12). ["No End in Sight": Torture and ill-treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic 2020-2023.](#)

14. Human Rights Watch (HRW). (December 16, 2015). [Syria: Stories Behind Photos of Killed Detainees.](#)

15. Amnesty International. (2016, August 18). [Syria: 'It breaks the human': Torture, disease and death in Syria's prisons.](#)

16. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, June 26). [SNHR's 12th Annual Report on Torture in Syria on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.](#)

As over three months has now passed since the ICJ order,¹⁷ we can conclusively state that the Syrian regime has enacted no tangible changes with respect to its oppressive policies and draconian security machinery, or even shown any initiative to repeal the laws legalizing torture and impunity. We have not seen any indicators that torture will stop. On the contrary, the Syrian regime has been committing more acts of torture, some of which even reach the criminal level of killing under torture. Since the ICJ's ruling was issued on November 16, 2023, up until March 2024, SNHR has documented:

First: 301 arbitrary arrests, including of six children and 18 women, with all those detained being imprisoned in regime detention centers. Of these, 36 were released, while 265 have been reclassified as enforced disappearance cases.

Second: At least 18 individuals have been killed under torture in regime detention centers.

Third: We documented no fewer than seven cases of individuals classified as forcibly disappeared being registered as dead in the state civil registry records.

3. The specter of enforced disappearance haunts the families of forcibly disappeared persons, raising grave concerns for the lives of about 113,000 Syrian citizens.

Enforced disappearance in Syria has been practiced in a widespread way and used as an assault against all sectors of society. The data and cases of enforced disappearance in Syria show that all parties to the conflict have resorted to use of enforced disappearance as a means of intimidating society, spreading fear, and consolidating control. As SNHR's database confirms, at least **112,713** persons are still forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria since March 2011. The Syrian regime is by far the worst offender, using enforced disappearance in a widespread and systematic manner through its security apparatus, viewing it as an extremely effective instrument with which to subjugate and crush any aspirations among the people for progress, freedom, and democracy. Through its ruthless use of enforced disappearance, the Syrian regime has massively surpassed all other parties to the conflict by inflicting and perpetuating use of this terrible strategy against all groups in Syrian society, whether men, women or children, the very old or very young, without showing the slightest shred of human decency or consideration and without making any exception for even the most vulnerable victims. The Syrian regime has been and continues to be the most prolific and primary perpetrator of enforced disappearance crimes in Syria, far exceeding all other parties to the conflict individually or collectively in numbers of enforced disappearances by a vast margin, being responsible for about 86 percent of all enforced disappearance cases. The Syrian regime's systematic practice of enforced disappearance qualifies as crimes against humanity.¹⁸ Enforced disappearance practices by the regime constitute also a war crime.¹⁹ Upon analyzing the available data, one can pinpoint a number of characteristics and common practices

17. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2024, February 22). [SNHR's 12th Annual Report on Torture in Syria on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#).

18. See: International Criminal Court (ICC), [Article 7](#) of the Rome Statute. As such, it does not fall under the statute of limitations. The same article guarantees the right for reparation for the victims' families, as well as the right to know the fate of the forcibly disappeared persons.

19. See: International Criminal Court (ICC), [Article 8](#) of the Rome Statute. Regime practices constitute a war crimes since they were committed "as part of a plan or policy" primarily by the Syrian regime in its response to the popular uprising for freedom.

within the enforced disappearance strategy implemented by the Syrian regime.²⁰ This includes the Syrian regime forcibly disappearing thousands of arrested people even before they can be taken to detention centers, which support our fears that they may have been eliminated or executed by the regime personnel at the checkpoints responsible for their arrest, and have never been transferred to any detention centers. The best-known example of this was seen in the atrocities committed by regime troops in al-Tadamun Neighborhood in Damascus.²¹ In addition, the regime employs no legal or formal effective means to look for forcibly disappeared persons, nor does it disclose the fate of any of the missing persons. Enforced disappearance is also related to torture and exceptional trials.

At least 1,623 forcibly disappeared persons have died due to torture, and we have obtained their death certificate, as the regime never notified their families of their death

In most cases, the Syrian regime does not notify victims' families of their deaths in regime detention centers on the date of their death. Usually, families find out about their loved ones' deaths either through former prisoners, following multiple visits to the Military Police's headquarters in Damascus, or through the records in civil registry offices. Families usually learn of their loved ones' death years after they happened.

In 2018, many families of forcibly disappeared persons were shocked to learn from civil registry offices that their relatives, who were forcibly disappeared in regime detention centers, had been dead for years. This has been a regular occurrence that we've observed, monitored and documented while collecting death statements. We have released **four reports**²² on this issue regarding the Syrian regime notifying families of their relatives' death through civil registry office records. This phenomenon has continued since 2018, albeit less frequently than over the previous few years.

At the beginning of 2022, however, we began receiving death certificates documenting deaths that had occurred up to a decade earlier, which had not been publicly revealed previously, and which the families of the victims in question had not been made aware of. Some of these death certificates were for prominent activists in the popular uprising against the Syrian regime, as well as for women and children. This prompted us to focus on this issue as we received **547** of these newly released death certificates. A crucial new factor about those death certificates is that we received them from confidential sources within the Syrian regime, and they had not been made public by the civil registry offices, nor had the families of the victims in question have been notified of their loved ones' deaths. We provided details on some of those death certificate [in an extensive report we released on December 20, 2022](#), in which we revealed that we had received hundreds of death certificates for victims who died in regime detention centers. To this day, we are still receiving details of new cases through our network of trusted and credible sources which we have built up over the years. As such, our team, at this point, has gained a great deal of experience in examining and verifying the authenticity of such documents. As of this writing, we have received **1,623** such death certificates signed by Syrian government officials.

20. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, August 30). [SNHR's 12th Annual Report on Enforced Disappearance in Syria on the International Day of the Disappeared: Enforced Disappearance is an Ongoing Crime in Syria](#).

21. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, January 24). [SNHR's 12th Annual Report: Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2022](#).

22. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018, July 13). [The Syrian Regime Records Forcibly Disappeared Persons as Dead in Civil Registration Offices](#).

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018, August 27). By Acknowledging the Death of 836 Forcibly-Disappeared Syrians at its hands, the Syrian Regime Convicts itself, yet the Security Council Does Nothing. <https://snhr.org/?p=52615>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, April 15). 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. <https://snhr.org/?p=57705>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, December 20). 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. <https://snhr.org/?p=58930>

4. Detainees are subjected to abnormal exceptional courts; the Military Field Court, for example, issued at least 7,872 death sentences and was involved in at least 24,047 enforced disappearances between March 2011 and August 2023

The Syrian regime surpasses many of the world's other authoritarian regimes by virtue of having absolute hegemony over the legislative and judicial branches of government. The regime has wielded this hegemony to promulgate a multitude of laws and decrees that violate international human rights law, as well as the principles of law and the parameters of arrests and interrogation established in domestic legislation and the current Syrian Constitution of 2012. The most notable of these illegitimate laws are Law No. 19 of 2012, known as the Counterterrorism Law,²³ which is used as grounds to try most detainees (in addition to the Syrian Penal Code²⁴ which is used as grounds to try detainees accused of crimes against state security and national security as specified in said code), and its subsequent amendment, Law No. 15 of 2022,²⁵ the Military Penal Code,²⁶ and the Counter-Cybercrime Law.²⁷ The Syrian regime has weaponized its arsenal of laws through exceptional courts, such as the Counterterrorism Court,²⁸ which was the subject matter of a previous SNHR report, in which we detailed its practices, methods, and rulings, in order to give an idea of the senseless brutality of this court, whose main purpose is to eliminate political opponents and detain civilians. Furthermore, the Military Field Court is one of the worst exceptional criminal courts established in Syrian history.

We at SNHR would like to emphasize that detainees imprisoned for participating in the popular movement for democracy in Syria have mostly been arrested and imprisoned for activities related to political dissent, human rights, or media activism, humanitarian relief work, and other similar peaceful activities. In the vast majority of cases, the regime's security branches extract wholly false 'confessions' to multiple offences from these detainees through coercion, intimidation and torture, with the most prominent of the charges against them being: inciting sectarian strife, threatening the ruling regime, weakening/hindering national sentiment, collusion with external and enemy forces, supporting and financing terrorism, weakening the nation's psyche, and 'spreading despair or weakness among the members of society'. As can be surmised, those are extremely broad, exceptionally vague charges, that are then written in official records, and any detainee may be referred to another security branch if he or she is wanted by more than one security branch. The detainee's fingerprints are generally placed on these records in lieu of a signature, again

23. People's Assembly of Syria, [Law No. 19 of 2012](#).

24. People's Assembly of Syria, [Law No. 148 of 1949](#).

25. People's Assembly of Syria, [Law No. 15 of 2022](#).

26. People's Assembly of Syria, [Law No. 61 of 1950](#).

27. People's Assembly of Syria, [Law No. 20 of 2022](#).

28. [The Counterterrorism Court](#) was established in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 22 of 2012 as serving as a substitute for the exceptional Supreme State Security Court, examining detainees' cases according to the Counterterrorism Law No. 19 of 2012, an article of legislation similar to the legislation on 'counter-revolutionary goals' issued in 1964, which violates the most basic principles and rules of law and human rights, under which a person can be arrested simply because he or she is suspected of not supporting the Syrian regime, with the court ruling on most cases of arrest carried out by regime forces. The Counterterrorism Court consists of three judges appointed by the President of the Republic, according to the proposal submitted by the Supreme Judicial Council, which is also chaired by the President of the Republic, and which tries civilians, military personnel, and juveniles, and issue sentences in absentia. In addition, these sentences may not be appealed except in the case of those who surrender themselves voluntarily. Although the body's official name is the Counterterrorism Court, it tries all types of crimes and can therefore be called an exceptional court; it is, in fact, part of the regime's security apparatus.

through use of coercion and torture. We note here that the personnel at these security branches rarely allow detainees to read and sign their 'confessions', but rather order them to place their fingerprint on the documents instead of signing them, doing so in most cases while they are blindfolded with a strip of cloth covering their eyes. These security records are then submitted to the Public Prosecution service, with the majority of them being transferred to either the Counterterrorism Court or the Military Field Court (these stages may take months or years, during which the detainees are exposed to the worst methods of torture, which potentially leads to death).

Issuing a death sentence through an unfair trial is an automatic violation²⁹ of Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In the Syrian regime's case, death sentences have been carried out in a widespread manner in regime detention centers, including against children.

The Military Field Court is one of the worst exceptional criminal courts ever created in Syria's history for two main reasons: First: its dysfunctional bylaws and infamous reputation have made it one of the main apparatuses established by the Syrian regime to effectively streamline crimes of enforced disappearance, and provide a chillingly efficient instrument to eliminate and crush dissent, terrorizing dissidents and civilian activists, including children and women, through the power of its sentences. Second: The sheer, harrowing number of the victims who have been lost to these courts, as confirmed by SNHR's data, which indicates a strong correlation between enforced disappearances and Military Field Courts, which leads us to believe that many of the **96,000-plus** individuals classified as forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime have been tried by Military Field Courts. Enforced disappearances in regime detention centers are systematic in nature, rather than random, resulting from deliberate and calculated decisions and directives issued by a highly sophisticated security, military, and judicial hierarchy including all the echelons and apparatuses of power associated with detention centers, from the President of the Republic and the Vice-President on Security Affairs, to the National Security Council, Ministry of Defense, the various security directorates, exceptional judicial institutions, the Command of the Military Police, the Command of the Military, the Ministry of the Interior and other regime agencies down through the chain of command. That is to say that the massive number of people forcibly disappeared at the hands of the Syrian regime have been processed by the monstrous machinery of this security, military, and judicial hierarchy, with the most notable of these bodies being the exceptional judicial institutions. In relation to Military Field Courts in particular, the Syrian regime has resorted to referring detainees and forcibly disappeared persons to Military Field Courts since March 2011, i.e., since the earliest days of the popular uprising for democracy, and before the establishment of the Counterterrorism Court in July 2012, and in subsequent years. Moreover, analysis of the data shows a clear correlation between the number of victims forcibly disappeared at the hands of the Syrian regime and the victims referred to Military Field Courts. Meanwhile, there is a large disparity between the number of people who were tried by Military Field Court and survived and the number of those tried by the regime's Counterterrorism Courts who survived. On September 12, 2023, [we released an extensive report entitled, 'An Instrument of Death and Disappearance: How the Syrian Regime Uses Military Field Courts Against Activists and Dissidents'](#), which noted that the Syrian regime has admitted the execution of **7,872** individuals, including 114 children and 26 women, out of **14,843** detainees who received death sentences issued by Military Field Courts between March 2011 and August 2023. In all the cases where the death sentence had been issued and carried out, the victims' bodies have still not been returned to the families, nor have they been officially notified of the death of their loved ones. We believe this figure to be the bare minimum of the actual number of executions carried out against detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in regime detention centers. Moreover, no fewer than **24,047** of those forcibly disappeared by the regime, including 98 children and 39 women, have been referred to the Military Field Court in the same period of time, between March 2011 and August 2023, with their fate remaining unknown.

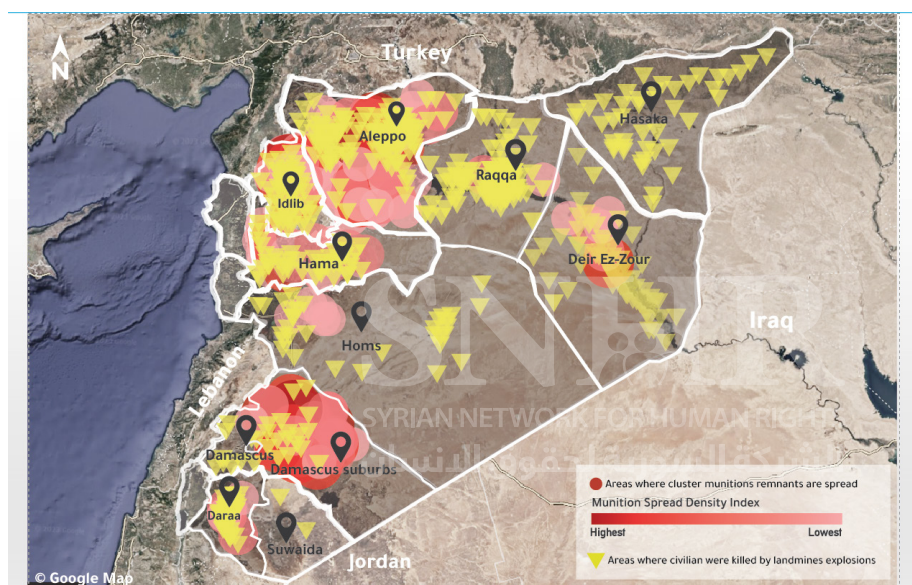
29. See: Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (n.d.). [Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.](#)

B. Landmines and cluster munitions remnants are still scattered across wide areas of Syria, posing a lethal threat to citizens' lives that will last for decades to come

Antipersonnel landmines (APLs) are defined as a type of munition designed to be installed above or below the ground, which are triggered and detonated when either a person or vehicle touches or approaches them. In line with this definition, cluster munition remnants that have not yet exploded are classified as APLs, since they bear similar characteristics in that they may potentially explode at any moment should any object touch them.

Large areas of Syrian territory have been contaminated by landmines at the hands of all the parties to the conflict and controlling forces. Meanwhile, none of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces have disclosed or fenced off the areas contaminated with landmines. Moreover, various areas of Syria have been repeatedly and heavily bombed using cluster munitions for nearly 11 years, first by Syrian regime forces and then, following the formal launch of Russia's military intervention in 2015, by Russian forces. Hundreds of cluster submunitions have effectively become live landmines³⁰ scattered across large swathes of land in various Syrian governorates, posing a lethal threat to civilians' lives for decades to come. On January 31, 2023, SNHR released an extensive report entitled, '[Cluster Munitions Remnants are an Open-Ended Threat to the Lives of Syria's Future Generations](#)', providing details of the nature of those munitions, and emphasizing the fact that they are scattered across wide areas of Syria. The report also contained a number of maps of the affected Syrian governorate showing the approximate sites of areas suspected to be contaminated with cluster munitions remnants. SNHR released a second report tackling this subject on April 4 entitled, '[On the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action: Landmines Continue to Plague Large Areas of Syria and Threaten the Lives of Millions](#)', which shed light on the use of APLs in Syria and the resultant casualties. Similar to the first report, this one revealed the sites where landmine explosions resulting in civilian casualties had been documented, as well as detailing the sites where cluster submunitions are still scattered, in an attempt to inform readers and alert local residents to stay away from these sites.

The map below shows areas of Syria contaminated with landmines as a result of the military operations carried out by the parties to the conflict between March 2011 and April 2023.



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

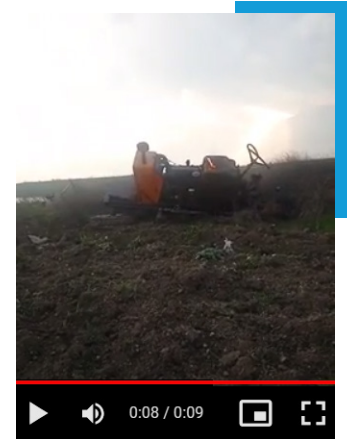
SNHR has documented the killing of at least **3,492 civilians**, including 917 children and 348 women, in hundreds of APL explosions across Syria since March 2011 up until March 2024. These deaths were divided between:

- **3,107 civilians**, including 792 children and 317 women killed by the explosion of landmines.
- **385 civilians**, including 125 children and 31 women, killed by the explosion of cluster munitions remnants left by cluster munition attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces.³¹

On the subject of injuries

Landmines have caused serious injuries and disfigurement to civilians. In any landmine explosion, it's usual for hundreds of fragments to penetrate the victim's body, possibly resulting in amputations or the rupturing of arteries and blood vessels, not to mention inflicting terrible eye and ear injuries. Although it is difficult to accurately determine the number of victims injured as a result of landmine explosions, we estimate that at least 10,856 civilians have been injured since March 2011, with many having to undergo amputations of limbs as a result of these explosions, and now requiring artificial limbs and rehabilitation and support programs.

It is clear, therefore, that the continuing presence of landmines continues to pose a major obstacle to the work and return of IDPs, as well as to the work of relief workers, Civil Defense personnel, and to their equipment, not to mention to the process of reconstruction and development.



Video of a tractor on fire, with the blaze caused by the explosion of a landmine in al-Qahera village in Sahl al-Ghab in rural Hama - January 29, 2023

31. We face special challenges in definitively attributing culpability in such incidents to either of the two parties to which we assign responsibility for attacks involving the use of cluster munitions, namely the Syrian regime and Russian forces. As such, we attribute culpability in cases of killing by the explosion of cluster munition remnants to the Syrian-Russian alliance. Since the first documented use of cluster munitions in Syria, in July 2012, SNHR has built a database specifically dedicated to the documentation of cluster munition attacks, feeling that this type of attack warrants special attention. SNHR's teams work tirelessly to ensure, insofar as is possible, that the type of munitions used in each attack, as well as the containers (both rockets and shells) carrying the cluster munitions, and the quantity of submunitions contained in each, are correctly identified. Carrying out this exacting work also helps in subsequently estimating the areas that have been contaminated by unexploded cluster bomb submunitions or bomblets. We also focus on identifying the launching platforms used or the airbases from which the warplanes that carried out the airborne attacks took off. According to the data we've collected through monitoring to date, the Syrian regime and Russian forces are the only parties that have used cluster munitions in Syria. These attacks have been carried out using rockets or shells containing dozens or hundreds of submunitions that were dropped from warplanes or fired from launching platforms believed to be stationed in the Mediterranean Sea or via ground-based rocket launchers. We have tried to distinguish between the attacks carried out by the Russian regime and the Syrian regime as much as possible.

C. Forced displacement: an ongoing tragedy, Syria is still unsafe for the return of refugee

Syria has borne witness to incomprehensible levels of violence against civilians by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, but first and foremost by the Syrian regime, in every part of the country, generating a constant and profound sense of fear and panic in the hearts of Syrians, that has driven them en masse to seek safety elsewhere, especially after indiscriminate bombardment, most notably by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, partially or completely destroyed most of Syria's villages, towns and cities, to the point that many have become uninhabitable. Meanwhile, the continuing security crackdowns by the Syrian regime's various and all-pervasive security apparatuses against Syrian dissidents have played a large role in displacing thousands more Syrians to other areas. Additionally, the siege and blockade policy enforced by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in many areas was followed by coercive settlement agreements that resulted in the forced deportation of thousands more people from their homes. In fact, the COI³² has concluded that there are grounds to believe that pro-regime forces may have committed a crime against humanity in the form of forced displacement.



↑👁 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 further north in Syria following heavy bombardment of the area by the Syrian-Russian alliance - December 24, 2019 © SNHR

Furthermore, the ongoing violations by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are the primary cause of more and more refugees fleeing. While It may be true that the rate of violations has fallen somewhat in the past two years, the cumulative effect of 13 years and counting of violations has brought about a Syria with an atrocious human rights situation, riven by killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, forced displacement, torture, pillaging of land and properties, and a widespread state of chronic insecurity under which assassinations and remote bombings have become prevalent, with these and many other violations combining to cause upheaval across Syria. In light of these violations that threaten the very fundamental tenets of human rights and human dignity, with no foreseeable end to this suffering or any feasible way to hold their perpetrators accountable, hundreds of Syrians are trying to sell their properties, flee their country, and seek asylum in other nations worldwide. Today, Syrian refugees are estimated to number 6.5 million, making them the largest single refugee population worldwide.³³

32. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). (2021, January 21). [Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic](#).

33. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). (n.d.). Mid-Year Trends. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends>

Waves of refugees continuing to flee as more violation are perpetrated show Syria's not safe for its residents let alone for the return of refugees

SNHR's monitoring shows that immigration waves are still rising, despite the persecution suffered by Syrian refugees in countries of asylum, and despite the Syrian regime and its ally Russia "inviting" refugees to return, while some countries are attempting to restore relations with the Syrian regime. We believe this to be an outcome of the following factors:

- Serious human rights violations are still being committed by the various parties to the conflict, primarily by the Syrian regime and its allies.³⁴
- Military operations are still being carried out by the various parties to the conflict across Syria.
- The deteriorating economic, living, and humanitarian situation throughout Syria. This is only natural after 13 years of conflict.

On November 1, the OCHA released a statement entitled, '[The Cost of Inaction](#)', in which it revealed that there are still about 6.8 million IDPs in Syria who have little hope of returning to their original homes.



↑ Families fleeing Jabal al-Zawiya in southern rural Idlib for safer areas in northern rural Idlib in the wake of intensified regime bombardment - September 4, 2023 ©SNHR

34. On November 10, Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, and Samuel Cheung, Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Coordinator, released [a joint statement](#) expressing their concern at the ongoing impact of the fatal ground and aerial attacks targeting densely populated areas, including IDP camps, in multiple areas in Idlib governorate and western Aleppo in northwestern Syria. The statement stressed that, since early-October 2023, northwestern Syria has been an epicenter of intensified attacks by regime forces and other parties to the conflict, adding that "the consequences of this surge in hostilities have been widespread, affecting more than 91 communities in southern Idlib and western Aleppo."

With the refugee situation also continuing to worsen in neighboring countries, especially Lebanon and Turkey, we've documented more irregular, and extremely dangerous, migration attempts towards EU states, either by land via Turkey or by sea via the Mediterranean, with boats setting out from Turkey, Lebanon, or Maghreb states.³⁵

Since the earliest days of the uprising in 2011, SNHR has been working on documenting various patterns of violations. We feel, therefore, that we have reasonable grounds to claim that we have attained a thorough understanding of what the Syrian people have experienced and are still experiencing. Consequently, we reiterate and stress that seeking asylum is a fundamental right for Syrians that all those countries in which Syrians have sought asylum must grant them. Many of the violations committed by the Syrian regime against the Syrian people qualify as crimes against humanity and war crimes, for both of which there is no statute of limitations, while the other parties to the conflict have also committed numerous violations against the Syrian people, including some that constitute war crimes.

Restoring relations with the Syrian regime will lead to more Syrian refugees worldwide, not the opposite

Readmitting the Syrian regime into the Arab League³⁶ does not mean that Syria is in any way safe for the return of refugees since the regime is still committing crimes against humanity. SNHR is seriously concerned that any restoration of relations with the Syrian regime may lead to Syrian refugees being forced to return to Syria; indeed, SNHR has already recorded the refolement of hundreds of Syrian refugees from Lebanon since the beginning of April 2023. We have also recorded the arrest of 97 refugees who were forcibly repatriated most of whom were arrested by the Syrian regime's Military Intelligence detachment in the al-Masna border area.

35. On January 11, 2023, Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) [issued a report](#) stating that most of the asylum seekers documented in 2022 came from Syria and Afghanistan, with a total of 70,976 Syrian filing initial asylum applications in 2022, a 29.3 percent increase over the previous year. On January 31, the [Statistics Netherlands \(CBS\) released a report](#) saying that the number of asylum seekers in the Netherlands had increased by 44 percent in 2022 in relation to the previous year. The report added that Syrian asylum seekers are the largest group out of all asylum seekers, making up one-third of the total number of asylum seekers in the country with Syrian asylum seekers accounting for 12,640 of the 35,535 asylum requests received by the Netherlands in 2022. In terms of the number of Syrian applicants, this constitutes an increase by half compared to the year before. On February 22, [the European Union Agency for Asylum](#) said that EU countries had received 966,000 asylum requests in the year 2022 with a 50 percent increase from 2021. This increase means that 2022 saw the highest number of asylum requests since 2016. The agency added that Syrians accounted for the largest group of asylum seekers. According to the data, 132,000 Syrians requested asylum in EU countries in 2022.

36. On May 18, the 32nd Arab Summit at the level of leaders began in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The two-day summit was attended by a Syrian regime delegation, [presided over by Bashar Assad, the head of the Syrian regime](#), for the first time in nearly a decade. The regime's participation came after [an official invitation was issued by the King of Saudi Arabia on May 10, 2023](#). Following the summit, a statement entitled the '[Jeddah Declaration](#)' was issued by the participants. On the same day, SNHR released [a statement](#) entitled, 'Readmitting the Syrian Regime into the Arab League Does Not Mean that Syria is Safe for the Return of Refugees Since the Regime is Still Committing Crimes Against Humanity', in which we stressed that the Syrian regime had given no indications of goodwill towards the Syrian people, with approximately 136,000 Syrian citizens still imprisoned in regime detention centers. The group expressed serious concerns that any restoration of relations with the Syrian regime would lead to Syrian refugees being forced to return to Syria.

These well-founded fears stem from the fact that Syrian authorities are still committing gross violations against residents, some of which qualify as crimes against humanity. We believe that the refugees being forcibly repatriated will suffer similar violations amid the absence of any genuine or legitimate legal environment, with regime security agencies having full and uncontested control of the fate of both residents and returnees. As our exhaustive documentation confirms, the overwhelming majority of arrests are carried out without any court-issued judicial warrant being presented, with many of those arbitrarily arrested ultimately going on to become forcibly disappeared persons. It is probable that all those detained are being subjected to torture, [which is potentially lethal](#), in addition to being subjected to other violations such as conscription, extortion, and seizure of their lands and properties. On February 13, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) [released an extensive report](#) on the violations and gross abuses faced by Syrian refugees who have returned to Syria. Those violations, the report stressed, are being perpetrated by the Syrian regime and other main parties across the country. Among the most prominent violations documented by the report are: Arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, enforced disappearance and abduction, as well as seizure of properties and denial of personal and identity documents. The report also sheds light on the persecution and forced deportation of Syrian refugees in a number of countries, especially nations neighboring Syria. "There are reasonable grounds to believe that the overall conditions in Syria do not permit safe, dignified and sustainable returns of Syrian refugees to their home country," the report concludes. The report also noted that most of those interviewed said they had decided to flee again, even though they will most likely face difficult economic challenges abroad.

Syrian refugees will not voluntarily return as long as the Syrian authorities' multiple violations continue. We are absolutely certain that these violations will not stop as long as the regime's security apparatuses continue to implement the same policies they have perpetrated since 2011. The decision of some states to restore relations with the Syrian regime has eradicated any hope of bringing about a political change towards democratic governance, prompting tens of thousands more Syrians to seek asylum.

It is imperative that the governments of states hosting Syrian refugees, especially neighboring countries which house the largest proportion of refugees, should stop their constant threats against these refugees to deport them back to Syria, which only causes further anxiety amongst already traumatized refugees, threatens their material stability, and hinders the processes of social integration. Meanwhile, the international community and the UN Security Council should work, as a matter of urgency, to bring about a political transition in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254 in a way that creates a foundation for a safe and democratic legal environment that respects human rights and international law. Only when Syrian refugees feel safe, and only then, will they voluntarily choose to return to their home country and their homes.

Refoulment of refugees and forced repatriation of asylum seekers constitute violation of international law

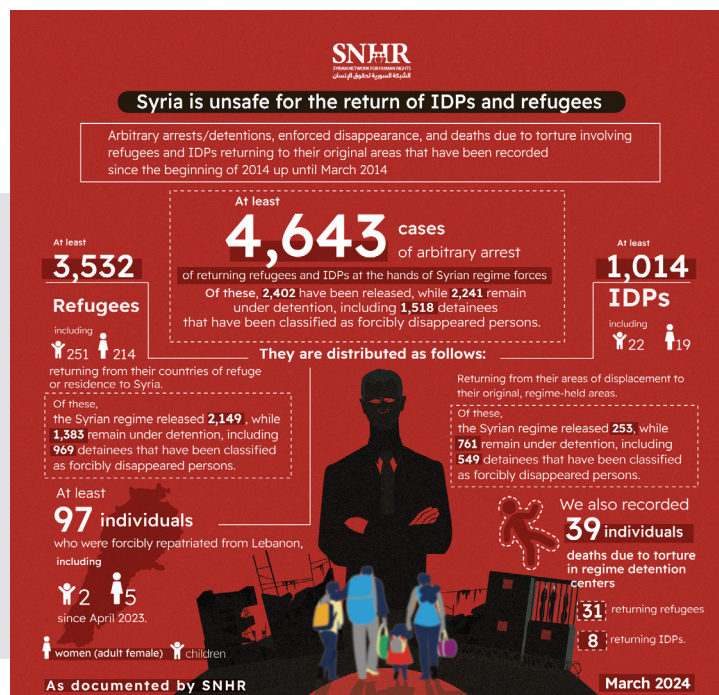
No government in the world has the right to assess the situation in Syria and then make the decision to deport Syrian refugees back to Syria based on such an assessment. This task, namely assessing the situation in Syria, is the responsibility of the UNHCR, the COI, the international human rights organizations, and of active local human rights organizations working to document violations in Syria, such as SNHR. All these entities have confirmed that Syria is unsafe.

We at SNHR have proven conclusively in dozens of reports that returning refugees are subjected to the same life-threatening violations suffered by local residents in Syria, amid an absence of any legitimate or credible legal environment and the prevalent climate of oppression, despotism, and the centralization of authoritarian rule. There can be no free and dignified return for refugees without first realizing a political transition towards a democratic government that respects human rights.

From the start of 2014 until March 2024, SNHR documented no fewer than **4,643 arbitrary arrests** against refugees returning to their homes in Syria from countries of asylum or residence, with all these individuals being arrested by Syrian regime forces. Today, a total of **2,402** of these people have been released, while **2,241** are still being detained, including **1,518** people who have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared. These are divided into:

- **3,532 arrests**, including of 251 children and 214 women (adult female), of refugees returning from countries of asylum or residence to their original areas of residence in Syria. Today, a total of 2,149 of these people have been released, while 1,383 are still imprisoned, including 969 people who have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared.
- **97 individuals** who have been forcibly repatriated from Lebanon, including two children and five women. Most of these people were arrested by the Syrian regime's Military Security Intelligence detachment in al-Masna border area between April 2023 and March 2024.
- **1,014 arrests involving IDPs** who returned from their areas of displacement to regime-held areas, including 22 children and 19 women. Today, a total of 253 of these people have been released, while 761 are still being detained, including 549 people who have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance.

We have also documented the deaths of **39 individuals** due to torture in regime detention centers. Of these, 31 had returned from countries of asylum, while the remaining eight were returning IDPs, six of whom had previously been displaced from their original areas to northern Syria as a result of the forced displacement agreements struck with the regime.



The refoulment of refugees and the forced repatriation of Syrian refugees constitute blatant violations of customary international law. Any governments carrying out such practices bear legal responsibility for any torture, killing, enforced disappearance, and other violations potentially perpetrated by the Syrian regime against forced returnees, in addition, of course, to the Syrian regime's direct responsibility for those violations.

D. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have destroyed vast areas across Syria, uprooting millions of Syrians from their lands and homes towards the uncertain fate of forced displacement

Numerous factors have contributed to uprooting Syrians from their land and homes, pushing them towards forced displacement. The vast majority of IDPs have been driven out by the violence perpetrated by the parties to the conflict in Syria. The levels of forced displacement carried out by the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies far surpass those of all the other parties to the conflict; this is due to several reasons - most importantly the use of aerial weaponry, savage and barbaric bombardment, and the population's fear of brutal retaliatory operations, or of arrest, torture, or illegitimate conscription into regime forces.

In the course of our work on the issue of forced displacement in Syria, we have noticed that the destruction of cities and towns has been a deliberate goal in and of itself to force the local populations into surrender, displacement, and humiliation. The displaced are usually the most impoverished groups of society, having lost their homes, possessions and livelihoods. Indeed, residents have had to leave everything behind. For the Syrian regime, this is a goal, to exact the most devastating revenge against those who dared to defy it and demand freedom, not simply to uproot people from their homes, but to make them pay

the highest of costs as a punishment for demanding political change. This is what many researchers overlook when they question the regime's purpose in bombing civilian neighborhoods with such severity and inflict destruction of such a massive scale, extent and intensity. This has been a consistent pattern throughout the regime's offensives over the last 13 years. Relatedly, SNHR has built a vast database on the operations of forced displacement in Syria over the past 13 years through the collection of data, accounts, and pictures, all of which we used to build a chronology of events in the various regions whose inhabitants were displaced. In this context, some residents have been displaced more than once, and some areas have been displaced by more than one party. The issue of internal forced displacement in Syria is a complex and intricate one, with a large number of factors intertwined. [We have utilized our databases in a large number of reports](#), and [spoken in many special reports about de-escalation zones](#), and compulsory reconciliation agreements, whose content included the forced displacement of their people, all of which came after military campaigns involving violent military escalation and large numbers of gross violations, and ended with the Syrian regime and its allies establishing control over those areas, one after another. We have also released numerous reports that highlighted many areas in the fourth de-escalation zone, which also experienced military escalation by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces, and also suffered the same outcome, namely Syrian-Russian alliance forces gaining control over those areas, and displacing hundreds of thousands more people in the process.

We have concluded that aerial attacks are the cause of about 70 percent of the entirety of the destruction that occurred in Syria. Those aerial attacks were carried out by the Syrian and Russian air forces. In this context, it is important to single out the indiscriminate barrel bombs which have been a devastating weapon causing massive destruction. One barrel bomb has the destruction capacity of seven mortar shells on average. This is of course in addition to the use of other weapons, including cluster munitions, against residential neighborhoods by the Syrian regime and its allies.

Through our daily monitoring and documentation over the past 13 years, we have noticed that the Syrian regime and its Russian allies initiate their directed offensives at certain area by targeting vital facilities. In fact, this tactic has been identified in all of the areas that have been besieged and then bombed. Such barbaric strategies aim to crush residents' spirit and drive them to flee. When an aggressor bombs medical facilities, civil defense facilities, and markets, they are sending a brutally blatant message to the peoples there, that there is, in the absence of any international intervention to protect civilians' lives in Syria, no choice but to surrender or to flee. International humanitarian law is explicit in prohibiting any and all attacks and acts of violence whose aim is to spread fear among civilian populations.³⁷ SNHR has created sub-databases specifically to document attacks on vital civilian facilities, [and we issue monthly reports documenting such attacks](#).

In some cases, we work on documenting the destruction to regular residential buildings using satellite imagery and obtain pictures and videos taken from the ground, where we try and conduct an approximate survey of those areas and then extrapolate the findings to other villages and neighborhoods from which we have not been able to obtain pictures and video footage. Using this methodology, our estimates suggest that about 70 percent of the areas which the regime recaptured are damaged, and either almost or completely destroyed. One residential building contains apartments housing dozens of families. This is all the more disheartening when one remembers that for a Syrian citizen to collect the necessary funds to rent or buy a home takes years if not decades.

37. Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, [Article 51-2](#). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977., [Article 13-2](#).

SNHR has analyzed satellite imagery of a number of Syrian areas. The following section outlines some examples that help give a sense of the scope of destruction that devastated vast areas across many Syrian governorates, inflicted in barbaric attacks by regime forces and their allies across Syria.

1. Eastern Ghouta in Rural Damascus

The towns of Eastern Ghouta had endured a suffocating siege that was initiated by regime forces in October 2013. This siege gradually turned into a form of collective punishment that saw relentless aerial and artillery attacks in parallel with a comprehensive starvation policy. Nonetheless, the forces of the Syrian and Iranian regimes could not penetrate Eastern Ghouta until Russia decided to intervene, using its air force, in early-2018. Between February 18, 2018, and April 12, 2018, Eastern Ghouta was subjected to ferocious bombardment using all types of highly destructive weapons and ammunition.³⁸ The people of Eastern Ghouta would watch as swarms of warplanes, particularly Russian warplanes, took turns to bomb their towns and neighborhoods in quick succession. Meanwhile, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes and helicopters would also drop missiles and barrel bombs, in addition to deploying chemical weapons and cluster munitions, all this being in addition to the widespread ground attacks. Naturally, all of these ruthless attacks resulted in unimaginable and harrowing destruction. To make sense of this destruction, we compared satellite imagery of Eastern Ghouta captured at the beginning of the siege in October 2013 and ones captured in March 2018. Below are some examples:

Two satellite images showing the scale of the destruction in Misraba town caused by Syrian-Russian attacks between October 2013 and March 2018



38. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018, May 31). Satellite Imagery Proves that Russian Attacks Have Exterminated Entire Eastern Ghouta Towns. <https://snhr.org/blog/2018/05/31/52253/>

Two satellite images showing the scale of the destruction in al-Shefouniya town caused by Syrian-Russian attacks between October 2013 and March 2018



Two satellite images showing the scale of the destruction in Beit Sawa town caused by Syrian-Russian attacks between October 2013 and March 2018



Two satellite images showing the scale of the destruction in Douma city caused by Syrian-Russian attacks between October 2013 and March 2018



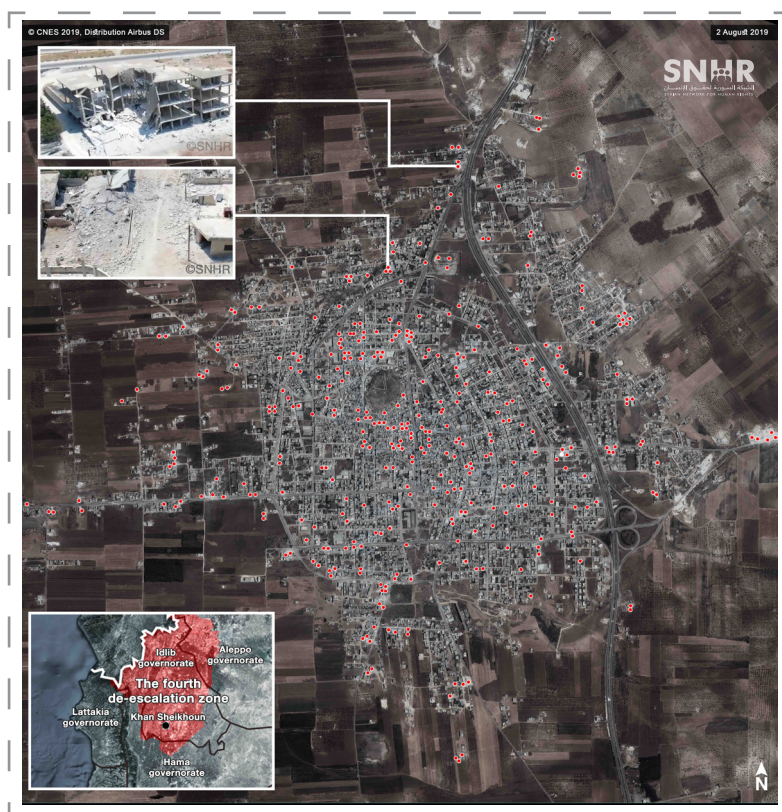
2. Khan Sheikhoun city in Idlib governorate

Khan Sheikhoun city, in southern rural Idlib governorate, housed the largest community in the southern rural region of Idlib, which is adjacent to northern rural Hama. The people of Khan Sheikhoun city were among the first to join the popular uprising that began in March 2011, with the city being taken over by armed opposition factions in May 2014.

On April 26, 2019, Syrian-Russian alliance forces launched a wide, planned offensive that saw hundreds of violations of international humanitarian law, as documented by SNHR. A large proportion of these violations constituted war crimes. We documented that Syrian-Russian alliance forces deliberately tried to bombard and destroy as many residences as possible, especially the vital facilities located in de-escalation zone 4 (comprising Idlib governorate and parts of the governorates of Hama, Aleppo, and Latakia). This was particularly the case in the south of the city, since those areas were adjacent to regime-held areas. On Friday, August 23, 2019, the Syrian regime's General Command of the Army and Armed Forces [announced it has taken over Khan Sheikhoun city](#).³⁹

SNHR purchased satellite images of the city that were captured on August 2, 2019, in order to document and analyze the size of destruction the city has seen since it broke out of the regime's control in May 2014 up until August 2019, especially in the last four months leading to the regime's takeover of the city.⁴⁰

Analysis based on satellite imagery showing the most damaged buildings in Khan Sheikhoun city as a result of the attacks of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces



39. According to figures by Khan Sheikhoun city's local council, the city had a population of 110,000 people in August 2019, including about 25,000 IDPs. The majority of the city's population were displaced towards the north, to areas under the control of armed opposition factions in fear of any potential brutal retaliatory acts by regime forces and supporting Iranian militias that took over the city towards the end of August.

40. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2019, September 16). Satellite Images Obtained by SNHR Prove the Extent of Massive Destruction Inflicted on Khan Sheikhoun City. <https://snhr.org/blog/2019/09/16/54236/>

The analysis above shows that buildings heavily destroyed in bombing can be found in about 220 points in the city. We cross-checked those sites with pictures and video footage taken from the ground that we had previously obtained, to find out that about 35 percent of the city's area has been completely destroyed, while 40 percent has been partially destroyed. In other words, about 75 percent of the entirety of Khan Sheikhoun city has been destroyed either completely or partially.

Some of the videos we analyzed and cross-checked with satellite imagery that show the scale of destruction in Wadi al-Ein neighborhood in northwestern Khan Sheikhoun city and the city's northern entrance. The videos were captured on August 10, 2019



↑ Aerial photo exclusive to SNHR that shows the size of destruction in Khan Sheikhoun city in Idlib as a result of the attacks of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the city - photo was captured on August 3, 2019. ©SNHR

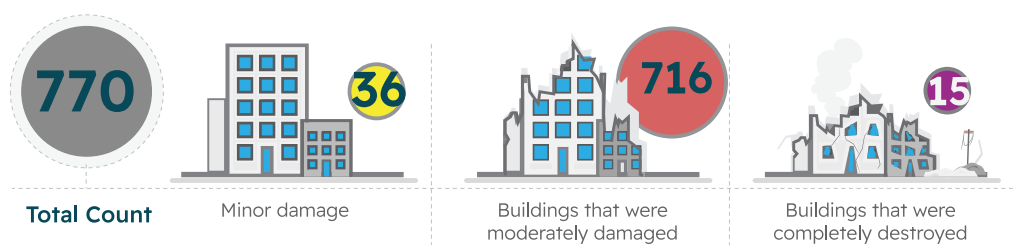
3. Ma'aret al-Nu'man city in Idlib governorate

Located on the Damascus-Aleppo International Highway (M5), Ma'aret al-Nu'man city is located in the southern rural areas of Idlib governorate, about 45 kilometers to the south of Idlib city. Syrian regime forces raided the city on August 8, 2011, after the residents had joined the popular uprising calling for political change. Regime forces stationed themselves in al-Hamdiya Camp in south of the city, and the Wadi al-Deif camp in the east. On October 8, 2012, armed opposition factions took control of the city, while the regime remained in control of the two military outposts until December 15, 2012, when armed opposition factions took control of the whole of the city.

In mid-2019, Syrian-Russian alliance forces started targeting Ma'aret al-Nu'man city, with these attacks seriously intensifying in a concentrated offensive that began in early-December 2019.⁴¹ Eventually, regime forces took over the city on January 28, 2020, after it has been completely emptied of its residents and almost totally destroyed.⁴²

We have selected Ma'aret al-Nu'man as a case study⁴³ of the destruction that was seen in many areas in de-escalation zone 4 in the wake of the intensified and widespread offensive that was launched in December 2019. This was because Ma'aret al-Nu'man was the largest and most densely-populated city in the areas that the regime and its allies captured in that offensive, which lasted until March 2020.

To give a sense of the massive destruction, SNHR purchased satellite images captured on February 27, 2020, after the regime and its allies had taken over Ma'aret al-Nu'man city. In an exhaustive process that took days to complete, we minutely analyzed the destroyed or damaged buildings. We pinpointed 770 points of destruction in the city, divided into:



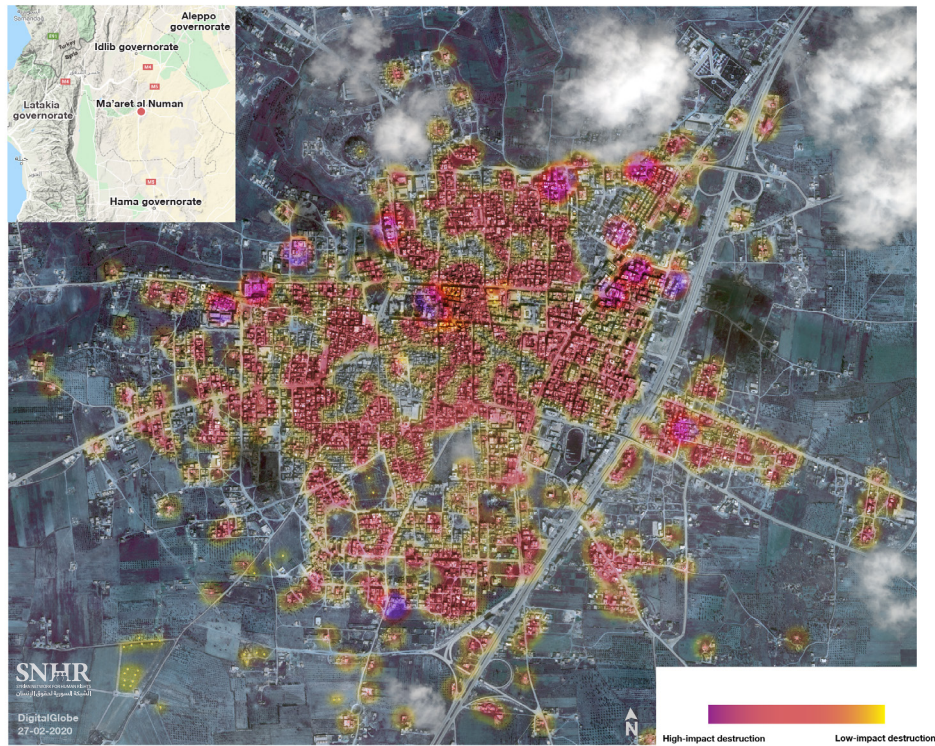
The ratio of points of destruction to the area of the populated city, which is 8.5 kilometers squared (850 hectares) is 90 points of destruction to every one square kilometer (or nine points to every 10 hectares), which is an incredibly high ratio. Through this calculation, we found out that about at least two percent of the city's area had been completely destroyed and about 40 percent partially destroyed, as shown in the images below:

41. In early-December 2019, the Syrian regime and its allies re-started their offensive on Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas. This offensive targeted the cities of Ma'aret al-Nu'man and Saraqeb and the surrounding areas, as well as northwestern rural Aleppo. SNHR has released numerous reports on these offensives and the truces and ceasefire agreements struck in the course of that offensive. These reports document the violations taking place [in those offensives that saw massacres, attacks on medical facilities, and attacks on civil defense facilities](#), as well as [the most prominent weapons used and the resultant destruction and forced displacement](#).

42. Up until the start of 2019, Ma'aret al-Nu'man city had been a haven for thousands of IDPs who had been displaced from various areas of Rural Damascus, Homs and Hama by violence, military offensives, and horrific violations. The city also took in many IDPs who had fled northern rural Hama and southern rural Idlib in the wake of the regime military attacks targeting those areas between April-September 2019. The city's population was estimated at 140,000, including 40,000 IDPs at the time, all of whom fled the city in the wake of the offensive carried out by Syrian regime forces and their Iranian and Russian allies.

43. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018, May 31). Destroying Ma'aret al Numan and Saraqeb Cities and Displacing Their Residents Is a Clear Example of the Syrian Regime's Tactics in the Recent Military Campaign Since Early December 2019 Until March 2020. <https://snhr.org/blog/2020/05/29/55015/https://snhr.org/blog/2020/05/29/55015/>

Analysis based on satellite images captured on February 27, 2020, showing the extent of the destruction in Ma'aret al-Nu'man and how it was emptied of its residents following the regime's takeover of the city on January 28, 2020. The regime took control of the city through the use of various types of weapons and unlawful bombardment



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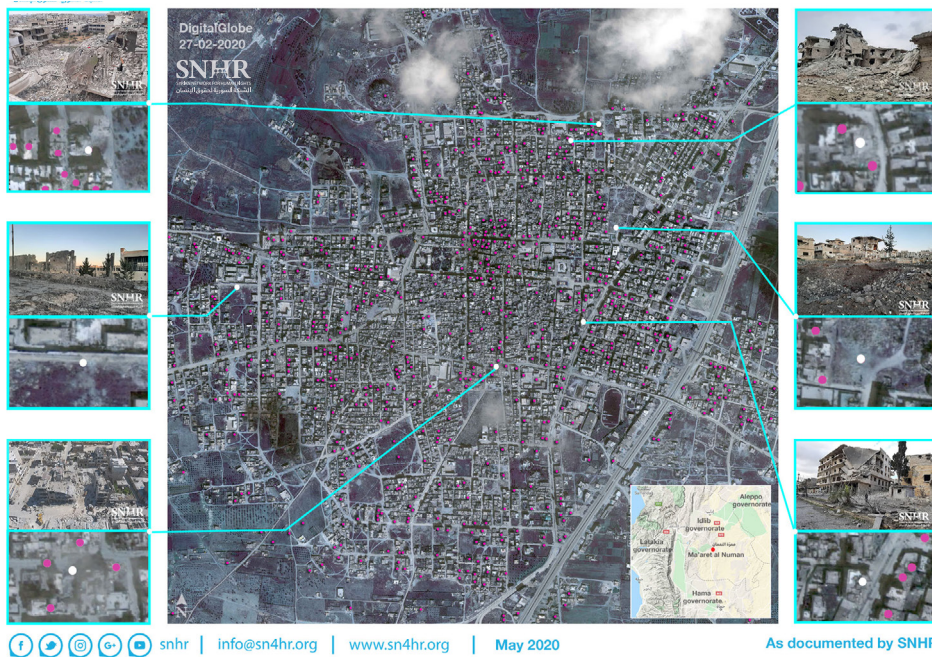
info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

May 2020

As documented by SNHR

Analysis based on satellite images captured on February 27, 2020, showing the buildings in Ma'aret al-Nu'man city in southern rural Idlib that were worst damaged in bombardment by Syrian regime forces and its Iranian and Russian allies. Syrian regime forces managed to take control of the city on January 28, 2020



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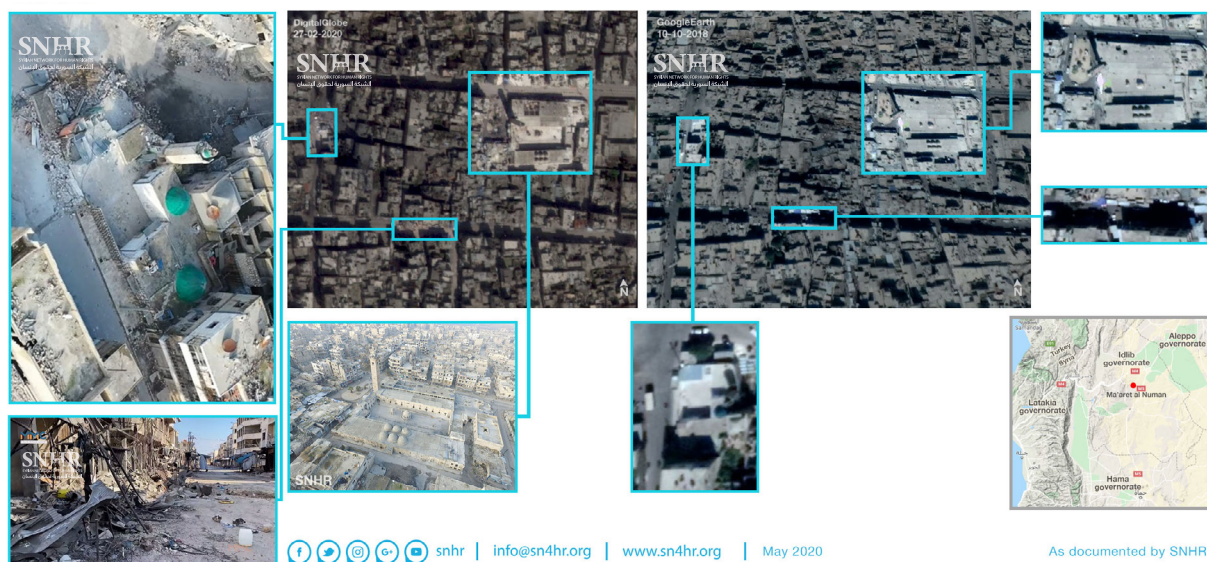
info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

May 2020

As documented by SNHR

Two 'before and after' satellite images, first showing some of the buildings in Ma'aret al-Nu'man city in 2018, then following the destruction unleashed by regime forces and their allies in February 2020 in taking over the city through intensive, widespread bombardment



The instances of massive destruction unleashed on Eastern Ghouta, Khan Sheikhoun, and Ma'aret al-Nu'man are by no means individual, isolated cases. Rather, they can be largely extended to the various cities and towns that the regime took over. These are simply examples which show that for the regime, the destruction of cities and towns and the displacement of their residents are goals in and of themselves in order to inflict the harshest punishment possible on anyone who dared to demand freedom and call for a political change.

E. The Syrian regime seizes Syrian dissidents' properties through laws and legislation promulgated since March 2011 in service of one goal, which is to take advantage of the chaotic climate of an internal armed conflict to accelerate the process of seizing the properties of Syrian dissidents

The Syrian regime has taken advantage of the consequences of the popular uprising, which eventually devolved into an internal armed conflict that displaced millions of Syrians due to the violations committed first and foremost by the Syrian regime itself, and secondly by the other parties to the conflict, to exploit the situation in its own favor in regard to the real estate ownership issue. To that end, the regime used the reality and aftermath of the armed conflict to attain as many long-term gains as possible, which explains the regime's passing a slew of new real estate ownership laws. In this context, the issuing of many real estate laws was closely connected to the developments in the armed conflict on the ground in Syria, whereby the Syrian regime would regularly issue legislative decrees related to real estate regulation after taking control of a certain area for the purpose of seizing the vacant properties in that area for the benefit of its allies and supporters. On April 25, 2023, SNHR released an extensive report entitled, ['The Laws Introduced by the Syrian Regime to Control Real Estate Ownership and Lands Before and Since the Beginning of the Popular Uprising in March 2011'](#), in which the group noted that, while the laws passed by the regime can theoretically affect every single Syrian citizen, these laws in particular were directly and principally targeted at three main groups:

- **First:** the forcibly displaced (both IDPs and refugees), estimated today at 13.4 million Syrian citizens according to the UNHCR;
- **Second:** the forcibly disappeared, estimated to number at least 113,000 Syrian citizens according to SNHR's database, with the Syrian regime being responsible for the enforced disappearance of over 85 percent of this total;
- **Third:** victims (civilians and fighters alike), who are estimated today to number about million Syrians, the overwhelming majority of whom have not been recorded as dead in the civil registry.

Needless to say, the overwhelming majority of the victims were dissidents opposed to the Syrian regime's autocratic rule, and were victims of the regime which has been continuously committing violation since March 2011. It is clear, therefore, that these laws pose a direct threat to nearly half of the Syrian population.

SNHR has traced the steps taken by the Syrian regime to take over real estate properties through the legislative decrees it's issued, whether these are related to the structure of real estate registries or to real estate transactions as a whole. To this end, we found out, that, through building this quasi-legal arsenal, the regime seeks to deny the fundamental rights that returnees, both IDPs and refugees alike, may demand at a certain point in time. Through these actions, the regime is creating a new reality in which most areas are under its direct authority through administrative units, and indirectly through real estate developers who win patronage through their blind, unquestioning loyalty to the regime.

Furthermore, many laws promulgated by the Syrian regime since March 2011 have had major implications for the real estate sphere in Syria. In this, the regime has indirectly linked real estate records and documents with those laws in order to deter any political dissident from attempting to seek to defend their housing, land, and property (HLP) rights afforded by the constitution for fear of risking arrest in light of these laws. Most of the laws and legislative articles promulgated by the Syrian regime since March 2011 all originated from the same malign motivation, namely of taking advantage of the chaos caused by the internal armed conflict to accelerate the process of seizing and stealing the properties of Syrian dissidents, especially those belonging to the three groups identified above. Moreover, not only did the regime construct a legal arsenal to justify the theft of dissidents' properties, but it also took advantage through the creation of indirectly related legislation such as the 'Counterterrorism Law', in order to prevent dissidents and members of the three aforementioned groups from exercising their rights over their properties in Syria, through the creation of an interminable bureaucratic maze that effectively renders any effort to exercise those rights impossible.

The Syrian regime has used several instruments, in addition to the laws and legislative articles it passed, to seize ownership and control of land and real estate properties, which we detailed in our report.⁴⁴ Those include:

- Widespread destruction. It was discovered in dozens of areas attacked by the Syrian regime that the destruction inflicted was not incidental but was a goal in and of itself, to drive people out of those areas and inflict as much destruction as possible so as to enable the regime to easily pillage and loot the destroyed areas and steal the properties of the displaced residents, relying on the laws it had passed to confer a spurious legitimacy on these activities.
- The issue of incomplete civilian documents, with the Syrian regime denying hundreds of thousands of dissidents their most basic rights afforded by domestic and international laws, including the right to acquire identification documents. One demonstration of this criminality came in the form of the regime's demand that individuals who have been internally displaced or sought refuge abroad, who justifiably fear that they may be arrested and tortured if they return to their home country, should be physically present before being able to claim ownership. This effectively creates two major problems: firstly, denying the fundamental rights of a whole generation of dissidents displaced, killed, or forcibly disappeared by the regime, and secondly denying the rights of a second generation born during the period of the armed conflict in areas under the control of the opposition, with the overwhelming majority of these children's births not registered, depriving them of official identification documents.
- Manufacturing the security clearance issue: These are a type of permission document issued by the Syrian regime's Political Security agency to conclude the process of transferring ownership of a property. In reality, however, the regime uses this security clearance requirement as a weapon against political dissidents, with sales and ownership transfers now requiring the approval of the Political Security division, and with the same measures applied to the acquisition of property, attaining judicial representation for a missing person or a power of attorney, which should be a very simple

44. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2018, May 31). [The Laws Employed by the Syrian Regime to Control Real Estate Ownership and Lands Before and After the Beginning of the Popular Uprising in March 2011.](#)

bureaucratic procedure that has now become an unnecessarily exceptionally complicated, if not impossible, task due to the security clearance requirement, especially if the principal or the agent are wanted by the authorities or have not fulfilled their mandatory military service, or basically if there are any reservations on them for any reason.⁴⁵ Obtaining security clearance, in some cases, takes three months, but unsurprisingly many requests are rejected if the owner has been abroad or there were any security concerns. Some studies estimate that about 60 percent of all security clearance requests are rejected according to people with knowledge of the current situation regarding real estate in Syria.

The mechanisms by which the Syrian regime has used laws to expropriate tens of thousands of homes, properties and areas of land – Homs governorate as a case study

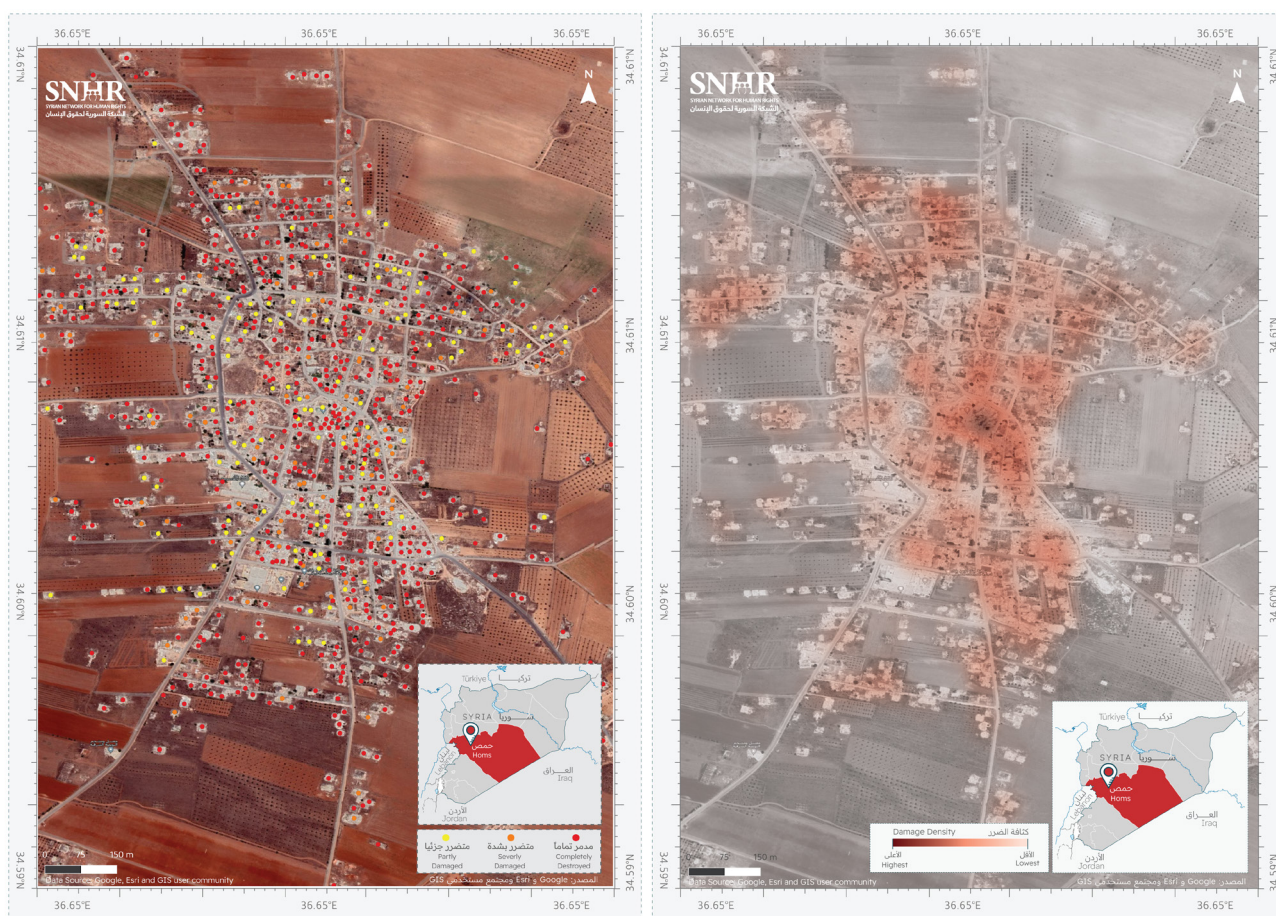
As SNHR has noted previously, the Syrian regime has expanded its attempts to expropriate Syrians' real estate properties in parallel with the dwindling rates of bombardment, killing, and displacement in the last six years since 2018, compared to the preceding period. In this, the Syrian regime has used an arsenal of laws and decrees that were promulgated unlawfully to expropriate real estate properties taking advantage of the internal armed conflict and its absolute hegemony over the People's Assembly of Syria and the other legislative and executive bodies. As mentioned earlier, those laws can theoretically affect all categories of Syrian people, primarily targeting the three aforementioned groups. In order to tackle this issue in a way that corresponds with our approach that focuses more on the practical side than solely on analysis of legal texts, [we released an extensive report on October 21, 2023, shedding light on the 'The Mechanisms by Which the Syrian Regime Has Used Laws to Expropriate Tens of Thousands of Homes, Properties and Areas of Land in Homs Governorate'](#), which took Homs governorate as a case study.

Monitoring HLP rights violations by the Syrian regime at the beginning of the popular uprising, i.e., in 2011 and 2012, led us to observe that these violations have always taken a punitive form in that the Syrian regime has used them especially to exact revenge against those who took to the streets demanding freedom and democracy. This was the case in Homs governorate in 2012, when HLP rights violations were committed in a focused way against those villages, towns, neighborhoods and areas that opposed the Syrian regime, as well as in areas with sectarian tensions, as in the cases of the two neighborhoods of Bab Amr and al-Inshaat. Subsequently, these practices took a more crystallized, systematic, and calculated form according to which HLP rights violations became a systematized process on their own, in Homs and nationwide, following a set pattern that began with ferocious and concentrated, targeted bombardment of certain areas, followed by a brutal military siege lasting months or years under which the targeted area's residents were completely isolated, denied food or medical aid; the people, terrorized and subjected to absolute deprivation, severe starvation and destitution, would be left with no alternative but to flee for survival to safer areas, leaving their homes, land and properties. In the final phase, having forced the people to flee, the regime would direct its forces, clients and allies to enter these areas, plundering them and expropriating and redistributing properties, or, in the worst-case scenario, completely demolishing them under the pretext that they were uninhabitable or damaged beyond repair. **Below are some examples of dozens of maps and satellite images that SNHR has designed for neighborhoods in Homs city, which shows the density and size of damage in the governorate**

45. Requesting a security clearance assumes, effectively, that every citizen is guilty until proven innocent, which violates Article 51 of the Syrian Constitution: "Every defendant shall be presumed innocent until convicted by a final court ruling in a fair trial;".

Maps showing the damage to real estate property in al-Bwaida city in Homs governorate since the beginning of the popular uprising

According to satellite images seen by SNHR, approximately 656 buildings in the city have been completely destroyed, while over 99 others were severely damaged to the point of rendering any potential rebuilding or structural repair processes meaningless. Additionally, over 156 buildings were partially destroyed, with a total of over 911 buildings targeted in al-Bwaida city. These figures, however, remain approximate and do not give a full picture of the actual, deliberate destruction that targeted the Syrian people's homes, properties and real estate assets in al-Bwaida city in Homs governorate.



It is worth noting that Syrian regime forces continued demolishing and taking control of the real estate properties in al-Bwaida city, which is evidenced by the uptick in the number of destroyed buildings in the wake of regime forces taking control of the city from 432 to 479. In other words, 47 buildings were destroyed after regime forces reentered the city. Furthermore, the buildings destroyed were located closely to those targeted in the regime's bombardment before taking control of the city, as shown in the photo below:

479

After May 2014



As documented by SNHR

www.snhr.org

حسب توثيق الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

432

Before May 2014



As documented by SNHR

www.snhr.org

حسب توثيق الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Broadly, this process of systematic violations, which the regime has followed repeatedly in different locations for the past decade, has inflicted incalculable losses and trauma on the victims. In the case of Homs, the regime's seizure of the properties of those forcibly displaced in this horrendous process has also intensified sectarian grudges and resentment in the governorate. As such, this report attempts to pinpoint the regime's underlying reasoning or 'philosophy', so to speak, in destroying neighborhoods and houses in order to seize homes, properties and other real estate, and to investigate the extent to which this has been effective in accomplishing the regime's goal of emptying Homs governorate of its indigenous population, as we attempt to attain an understanding of how the trajectory of this process of violations has affected the lives of civilians in Syria generally and the lives of the residents of Homs governorate, including its dispossessed population, more particularly. It is important to note in this context that this expropriation of properties on a vast scale will give the regime the upper hand in any potential reconstruction process, as well as in any process of redistributing private properties in line with its own vision and goals, which boil down to perpetuating the displacement of the native population and replacing these indigenous people with whomever the regime wishes. This necessarily means that it will be virtually impossible for refugees to return, as long as the Syrian regime continues its practices of seizing HLP.

Based on these maps, SNHR concluded that the maps indicate that the artillery and aerial attacks against many cities, neighborhood, and rural areas in Homs governorate was exceptionally excessive in relation to the anticipated military benefit for the regime or its allies in the ground, which strongly suggests that these attacks had no military purpose, but were carried out in pursuit of other goals, such as destroying and seizing the real estate properties of Syrian citizens by driving their owners out and then eliminating any possibility of them ever returning, paving the way for the regime to take advantage of the properties and lands it seized for the sake of the reconstruction process. This has been the ultimate end goal pursued by the regime regardless of the violation it has committed, the severe material losses it has caused, or the fact that it has impoverished the Syrian people by seizing their properties and lands.

F. The Syrian regime is taking advantage of state-issued documents and is committing a series of violations against its citizens in the process of acquiring official documents, using such processes to fund its war against the Syrian people, with passports as an example

in the years since the start of the popular uprising in Syria, the Syrian regime was in desperate need of sources of funds, having already exhausted the state's resources in its efforts to crush the uprising. Accordingly, the regime had to devise new ways to fund itself, especially with the rapid collapse of the Syrian economy. It hit upon using the income from passports as one of these sources, especially as the need for these vital documents rose among Syrians displaced internally and abroad, not to mention among citizens who were trying to travel to other countries in search of better living conditions.

As the demand for passports skyrocketed, the Syrian regime found this a lifeline to revive its hard currency reserves, so much so that the regular increases in passport prices came to resemble an ever-increasing stock price, as one can detect through the decrees promulgated by the Syrian regime.⁴⁶

On tracing all the legislative decrees and circulars promulgated by the Syrian regime's Ministry of Interior on passports, we discovered is that the regime has exploited the rising demand for passports on multiple levels. For one, the regime has turned its immigration and passport departments into security institutions which subject citizens to further persecution and draconian restrictions, while perverting the process of obtaining passports into a lucrative trade through which the regime makes millions of dollars annually to refill its hard currency reserves.

It is bleakly ironic that while the Syrian passport is one of the world's weakest, least useful passports, it is also by far the world's most expensive. We detailed this issue in a report released on February 28, 2024, entitled, 'The Syrian Regime Perpetrates Multiple Types of Violations Against Citizens Obtaining Passports In and Outside Syria', in which we highlighted the excessive costs Syrians are forced to bear to obtain a passport, and how these compare to passport costs for citizens of other nations worldwide. One aspect of this is the fact that the Syrian regime issues passports that are valid for no longer than two-and-a-half years for most Syrians, and only accept payment in US dollars. Naturally, the Syrian regime uses these funds to consolidate its power and fund its war against dissidents. Besides the high cost, SNHR pinpointed six patterns of violations that Syrians suffer at the regime's hands in their agonizing efforts to obtain passports.⁴⁷

46. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2024, February 28). [The Syrian Regime Perpetrates Multiple Types of Violations Against Citizens Obtaining Passports In and Outside Syria](#).

47. Ibid.

First: Syrian regime's requirement for every passport applicant to first obtain security clearance. The Syrian regime imposed this requirement between 2011 and 2015 with the aim of denying dissidents access to passports in an effort to prevent them from leaving the country. While this requirement was lifted in 2015, the Syrian regime has continued to 'weaponize' passports as a tool of persecution to tyrannize and persecute dissidents.

Second: Securitizing Immigration and Passport Department offices. Due to their involvement in the popular uprising for freedom and dignity, tens of thousands of Syrians are still wanted by the regime's security authorities. Many of these people, feeling they had no choice but to obtain a passport and flee the country, were shocked to find regime security personnel waiting for them when they went to obtain their passports, with many being arrested at Immigration and Passport Department offices across regime-held areas. SNHR has documented no fewer than **1,912** arbitrary arrests in this category since March 2011 up until February 2024, with these detainees including 21 children, 256 women, and 193 individuals who had previously agreed to settle their security situation with the regime. These 1,912 people were arrested at Immigration and Passport Department offices and detained in regime detention centers across Syria. Of the 1,912, **723** have been released and 21 have died due to torture and medical negligence, while the remaining 1,168, including 16 children and 96 women, are still imprisoned, with **986** currently classified as enforced disappearance cases.

Third: Degrading human dignity and abusive treatment at Immigration and Passport Department offices and some consulates and embassies, where citizens are commonly subjected to degradation. In some cases, employees also obstruct people's paperwork in order to force them to pay bribes or to go through middlemen.

Fourth: Frauds and scams in the process of obtaining a new passport or renewing an older one. This happens when dealing with middlemen. In many cases, people have paid large sums of money and only received fake passports in return.

Fifth: Prolonged, months-long waiting periods to obtain expedited passports, threatening the legal status of Syrians in host countries.

The unreasonably long waiting periods for processing passport applications, compared to other states, have complicated the legal status of many Syrians living abroad. For many, renewal of their residence and work permits is conditional upon having a valid passport. With Syrians in some countries unable to renew their passports, many are no longer able to renew their residence or job permits, and as a result have lost their jobs and been asked to leave their host countries, while others have faced the risk of being arrested due to having no valid residence permits.

Sixth: Issuing internationally unrecognized 'e-passports'

The e-passport program adopted by the Syrian regime on August 20, 2023, has cost thousands of Syrian citizens vast sums of money, with only a handful of states recognizing those new e-passports, while most states worldwide have, at least initially, refused to do so. This is because the regime failed to coordinate with other states and failed to notify these other nations' foreign ministries and diplomatic missions of the changes it made to the passport system. Eventually, many other states had to treat these new passports, for which many citizens had paid large amounts of money, as 'forged passports'.

Between imposing exorbitant prices for passports, and extorting money from Syrians in other, related ways, passports have become a financial lifeline for the Syrian regime. There are no official figures on how much money is going to the state from the issuance of passports, since the Syrian regime does not demonstrate even the slightest financial transparency, and has absorbed the Syrian state wholesale, subjugating its resources and using state officials to further consolidate its own power. The Syrian regime imposes unjustifiably and excessively high prices for issuing or renewing passports, thereby denying citizens who lack the financial means from exercising their rights to travel and freedom of movement, a blatant breach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

IV. The International Community Has Totally and Abjectly Failed to Bring About a Resolution to the Syrian Conflict and Realize A Political Change

A. The situation in Syria has been a threat to international peace and security since 2011, the UN Security Council has miserably failed to implement any of its resolutions on Syria 58

1. Of the UN Security Council's 29 resolutions on Syria, most of their contents have yet to be implemented, including those concerning the issues of detainees and of chemical weapons 58

2. Politicization of the humanitarian assistance file: since 2014, the Syrian regime has been stealing relief aid and turning it into a tool to fund its war against the Syrian people 60

B. Attempts to restore relations with the Syrian regime that is involved in crimes against humanity against the Syrian people 63



Destruction to a residential building in Wadi al-Nasim area in southern Idlib city following an attack by fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian that fired multiple missiles at the area, resulting in a massacre - February 4, 2018 © SNHR

SNHR believes that the perpetuation of a culture of impunity has emboldened the Syrian regime to continue to commit violations against the Syrian people for over 13 years, with many violations amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Indeed, the Syrian regime is still acting as though it will remain in power for the rest of time, treating all UN Security Council resolutions on political transition with utter disregard. This is manifested in the Syrian regime's holding parliamentary elections once every four years, as well as presidential elections, and local administration elections, all on the basis of the 2012 Constitution which the regime adopted unilaterally, ignoring the outcome of the Geneva Final Communiqué⁴⁸ which was included in Security Council resolution 2118,⁴⁹ and Security Council resolution 2254,⁵⁰ 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 three 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, as well as impeding the return of refugees and IDPs, and violate more of the rights of the victims killed by the regime, those who have fallen to the regime's machine of arrest/enforced disappearance, and the forcibly displaced.

Over the last 13 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 paths: the Arab League path, the Geneva path, and the Astana/Suchi path. 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 past reports.⁵¹ 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, there have been some attempts to normalize relations with the Syrian regime in recent years, that have been clearly intensified in the past year. In this context, we must reiterate that restoring relations with the Syrian regime in any shape or form is supporting encouraging the regime to continue its violations against the Syrian people.

48. 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 \(A/66/856-S/2012/522\)](#)

49. United Nations Security Council, [resolution 2118/2013](#)

50. United Nations Security Council, [resolution 2254/2013](#)

51. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2021, March 15). On the 10th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising: 227,413 Syrian Civilians Documented Killed, Including 14,506 by Torture, with 149,361 Detained/ Forcibly Disappeared, and 13 Million Others Displaced. <https://snhr.org/blog/2021/03/15/56027/>
 Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, March 15). [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.](#)

A. The situation in Syria has been a threat to international peace and security since 2011, the UN Security Council has miserably failed to implement any of its resolutions on Syria

1. Of the UN Security Council's 29 resolutions on Syria, most of their contents have yet to be implemented, including those concerning the issues of detainees and of chemical weapons

The UN Security Council has issued 29 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 2012,⁵² was predated by two Russian-Chinese vetoes.⁵³ 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, 41 percent of the resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council were related to the issue of UN humanitarian assistance, whose delivery does not even need to be addressed or allowed by the Security Council.

The UN Security Council has failed completely to reduce or put an end to the human rights violations in Syria; instead, these have, in many cases, 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.

18 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, both 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.

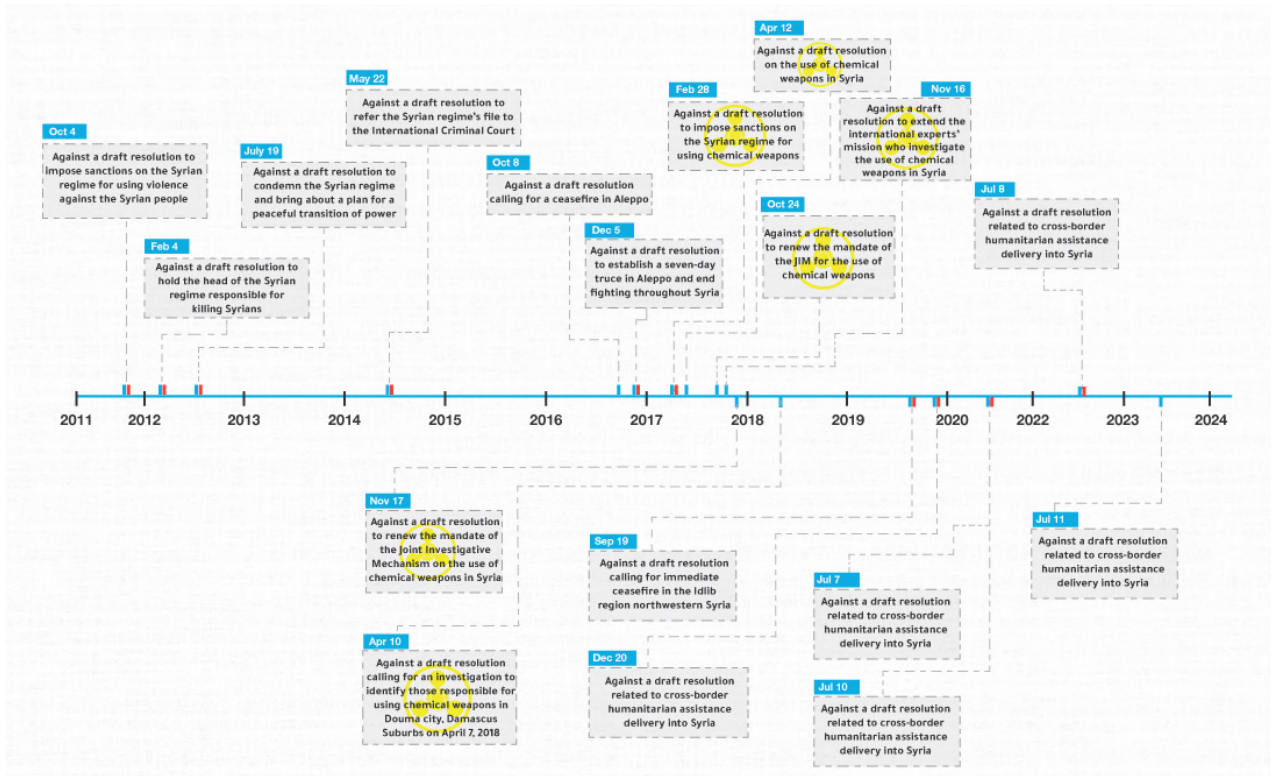
52. United Nations Security Council, [resolution 2042, adopted on April 14, 2012](#)

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

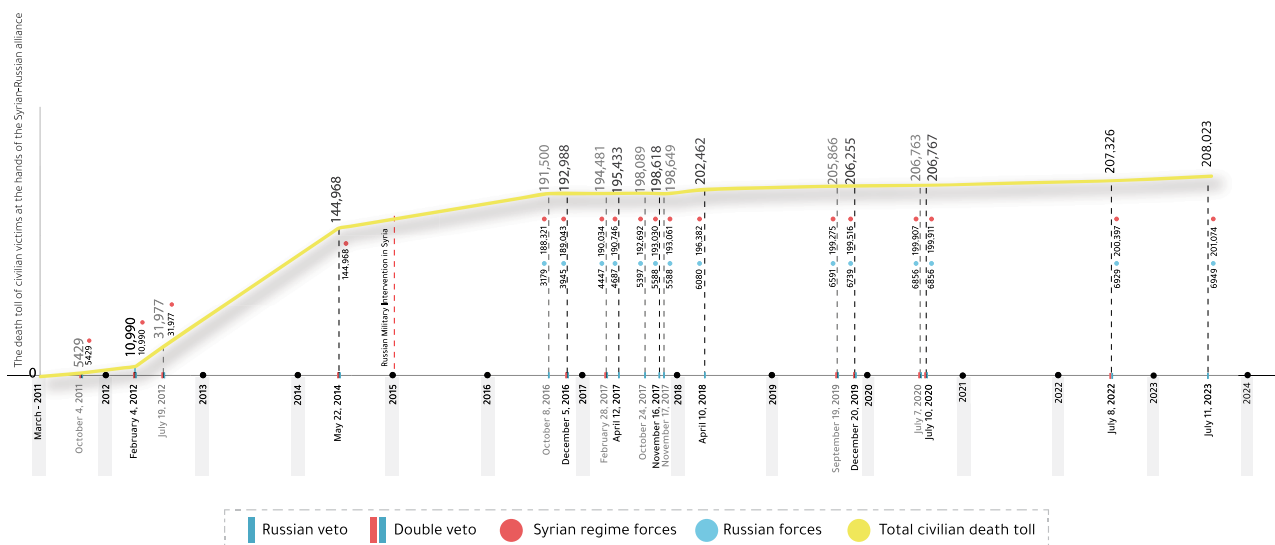
United Nations Security Council, draft [resolution S/2012/77, proposed on February 4, 2012](#).

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.

Russia and China have used their veto powers 18 times to protect the Syrian regime at the UN 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



2. Politicization of the humanitarian assistance file: since 2014, the Syrian regime has been stealing relief aid and turning it into a tool to fund its war against the Syrian people

On May 1, the UNHCR released [a report](#) revealing that, as the conflict in Syria enters its 13th year, 15.3 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance across the country, constituting a five percent increase from 2022. The report also stresses that the February 6 earthquake further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, adversely affecting approximately 8.8 million people in Syria. On December 21, [the OCHA released a report entitled, 'Syrian Arab Republic: 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview'](#), in which the UN agency revealed that it is estimated that 16.7 million people, including 5.5 million IDPs, will require humanitarian assistance countrywide in 2024, with over 2 million IDPs living in what the report described as “last resort” sites.

[Northwestern Syria houses no fewer than 4.5 million people according to the OCHA](#), with two million of these people living in camps. Ninety percent of this population relies on UN cross-border humanitarian assistance that has been delivered since 2014 [in accordance with UN resolutions](#). Sadly, this has left the issue of humanitarian aid vulnerable to massive yearly extortion by Russia, with the scope of humanitarian aid to Syria shrinking annually to the point of its being delivered solely via one crossing with the introduction of the concept of cross-line humanitarian assistance through [Security Council resolution 2585 \(2021\)](#), which was followed by [Security Council resolution 2462 \(2022\)](#), which stated that another six-month renewal would require a separate resolution. This was followed by [Security Council resolution 2672 \(2023\) issued on January 9, 2023](#), which provided for the renewal of the mechanism for humanitarian assistance delivery via the Bab al-Hawa Crossing with Türkiye into northwestern Syria for an additional six months, ending on July 10.

On February 6, 2023, a devastating earthquake hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria. [SNHR documented the fallout of the earthquake on Syrians and the resultant deaths in three separate reports](#). In total, 10,024 Syrians died in Türkiye and Syria as a result of the earthquake, including 4,191 who died in non-regime areas, and 394 in regime areas. Also, many Syrian refugees returned from Türkiye to northwestern Syria in the wake of the earthquake, further exacerbating humanitarian needs in the region, besides the large casualties numbers.

On February 13, 2023, and in response to the catastrophic situation in the wake of the earthquake, [the UN Security Council proposed a resolution allowing for humanitarian assistance entry for a year](#). However, the Syrian regime, under Russian orders, acted and blocked the resolution, only allowing for UN relief aid to enter from Türkiye into northwestern Syria via the Bab al-Salama and al-Ra'ie for an initial period of three months.⁵⁴

54. The Syrian regime decided to extend its authorization by additional three months on May 13. On November 13, the OCHA revealed that the UN and the Syrian regime had reached an agreement to extend the Syrian regime's permission for the use of Bab al-Salam and al-Ra'ie crossing to deliver cross-border humanitarian assistance to northwestern Syria by three months (until February 13, 2024). The understanding between the OCHA and the regime first became apparent following the February 6 earthquakes that devastated northwestern Syria..

The Syrian regime has exploited the February 6 earthquake catastrophe since its early days, both politically and economically. Many human rights groups, including SNHR, have warned repeatedly of the regime's theft of relief aid intended for the earthquake victims in Syria, as the regime did not send any of that aid to the areas outside its control despite the massive devastation seen in those areas. On May 12, Amnesty International released a legal analysis stressing that delivering impartial humanitarian assistance via the Syrian crossings to civilians who are in dire need of said assistance without authorization from the UN Security Council or approval from the Syrian regime is legal under international law on account of the absence of other alternatives and the imperative need for the UN border-cross relief operations to address the suffering of civilians and the gross human rights violations in northwestern Syria.

SNHR was one of the first organizations to stress that delivering cross-border UN aid to Syria does not require a green light from the UN Security Council. In fact, we have released several reports detailing our legal reasoning and the conditions required for the delivery of aid.⁵⁵ We have called for years for the international community to unshackle itself from the grip of Russia's extortion, and take the step of delivering impartial, essential UN relief aid without asking for permission from the UN Security Council. SNHR has based its legal position on five main reasons outlined [in a statement released on July 9, 2023](#), one day before the end of the mandate of UN Security Council resolution 2672.

On July 11, [Russia used its veto powers](#) in the UN Security Council to block a draft resolution to extend the cross-border mechanism to deliver humanitarian assistance to northwestern Syria by nine months, which had been proposed by the Switzerland and Brazil. On July 14, the Syrian regime sent [a letter](#) to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council informing them of its decision to grant permission to the UN and its agencies to use Bab al-Hawa Crossing to deliver humanitarian assistance with full collaboration and coordination for a period of six months starting on July 13. On August 7, the Syrian regime and Martin Griffith, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, [announced that they had reached an understanding](#) that would allow the UN and its partners to continue to deliver cross-border humanitarian assistance "at the necessary scale and in a principled manner that allows engagement with all parties for the purposes of seeking humanitarian access and that safeguards the UN's operational independence." On January 11, [the OCHA revealed](#) that the UN has been given permission by the Syrian regime to extend the delivery of humanitarian assistance from Türkiye to northwestern Syria via the Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing by six months.

55. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2020, July 6). The United Nations Should Continue Cross-Border Aid Delivery Even If Russia Vetoes the Extension of the Security Council Resolution. <https://snhr.org/blog/2020/07/06/55169/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2021, July 8). 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. <https://snhr.org/blog/2021/07/08/56507/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022, June 6). [UN Cross-Border Aid Must Continue to Enter Syria, Even If Russia Vetoes It.](#)

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, January 9). [Russia's Veto Blocking UN Cross-Border Relief Aid is Unlawful and its Only Aim is to Seize UN Relief Aid.](#)

The Syrian regime and Russia are the two primary cause of the displacement of millions of Syrians in northwestern Syria, and the reason why those displaced people cannot to this day return safely to their homes. An abundance of evidence has proved that the Syrian regime is stealing the vast majority of relief aid, with those genuinely affected and in desperate need only receiving 10 percent of the total.⁵⁶ This is because the Syrian regime has engineered the looting of relief aid that rely primarily on organizations that are wholly subservient to the regime itself,⁵⁷ the most prominent of which are the Syria Trust for Development (STD)⁵⁸ and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).⁵⁹ In reality, the Syrian regime has no regard for the suffering of the Syrian people whether in its areas of control or other areas. SNHR has released an extensive report detailing how the Syrian regime has used NGOs to steal donor funds, and how it took funds intended for humanitarian assistance and used it to serve its agenda and control the fate of the intended recipients of said funds.⁶⁰

It must be noted that that humanitarian aid, a mission of a most noble cause, must not be perverted into becoming an instrument to finance and support a regime responsible for crimes against humanity against its people. It is wildly unreasonable to rely on those who have committed monstrous violations against, and displaced a people to deliver UN humanitarian assistance to those same people and to compensate them and their families. Moreover, SNHR renews its calling on the Security Council to end its monopoly over the delivery of cross-border UN humanitarian assistance, since this should be within the scope of the UN General Assembly and the OCHA, and to stop using its veto powers in a way that violates international human rights law, especially in cases that involve crimes against humanity such as forced displacement.

The Syrian regime is using the SARC and the STD as instruments to steal humanitarian aid, alternative means must be devised to deliver humanitarian assistance to those truly in need in regime held areas

The violations committed first and foremost by the Syrian regime and, to a secondary degree by the other parties to the conflict, have plunged the country into an increasingly dire humanitarian situation since 2011. The Syrian regime has misused donors' funds in economic monopolies through which the key regime figures have added to their personal wealth. The regime has also indirectly benefited from UN bids for humanitarian projects established in regime-held areas.

56. When we note that the Syrian regime steals 90 percent of all relief aid and should not be trusted to distribute aid, we do not mean that the people in regime-controlled areas should not receive relief aid. These areas host massive numbers of people who are effectively hostages. Our message is that there is an urgent need to work on devising recommendations and plans that ensure the delivery of at least 60, 70, or 80 percent of relief aid to those affected, in a way that ensures that the intended recipients receive most of it and the Syrian regime is unable to steal as much of it, rather than stopping relief aid altogether.

57. One of the most visible types of evidence on the regime's theft of aid is the fact that these organization do not release financial transparency reports. No-one actually knows how much money they have received or how those funds have been spent. These bodies do not disclose their hierarchy, and solely employ people with close ties to the regime and the security apparatus.

58. The Syria Trust for Development (STD) is a governmental, non-independent organization affiliated with the Syrian regime's Ministry of Defense, which is managed by regime army officers, rather than independent civilian experts, according to the organization's own definition which can be found on the defense ministry's own official website: <http://www.mod.gov.sy/index.php?node=554&cat=3251>

59. The SARC was founded in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 117 of 1969, issued by then-President Nureddin al-Atassi, and at that time had extensive privileges and administrative and financial independence.

60. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023, December 28). How The Syrian Regime Uses the Humanitarian Organizations SARC and STD to Steal Humanitarian Aid. <https://snhr.org/blog/2023/12/28/how-the-syrian-regime-uses-the-humanitarian-organizations-sarc-and-std-to-steal-humanitarian-aid/>

The Syrian regime has used the SARC and the STD to take control of the relief sector. In pursuit of this objective, these two organizations have been propped up by the regime as a form of 'soft power', assisting in achieving the regime's goals, and acting as gateways to take control of donors' funds and monopolize international support, with the regime introducing a requirement that all relief and development funds coming from UN bodies and donor states must go through one of these two organizations. [On December 28, SNHR released a report entitled, 'How the Syrian Regime Uses the Humanitarian Organizations SARC and STD to Steal Humanitarian Aid'](#), in which we explained how the regime seizes aid funds and channels them to further its agenda and control the fates of their intended recipients, which the regime achieves through controlling the NGOs receiving and managing those funds. The report focused especially on the SARC and the STD because these were the two main front organizations used by the regime to receive relief funds. In fact, the Syrian regime initially forced UN bodies and donor governments to exclusively work with the SARC as the sole body authorized to receive aid funds. The Syrian regime demanded that all international humanitarian agencies should sign agreements and memorandums of understanding with the SARC which dictate that no projects can be implemented, or field visits conducted without first obtaining the SARC's permission. Subsequently, the STD was added as a second organization authorized to receive aid. The report showed how the Syrian regime has succeeded in transforming NGOs, such as the SARC and the STD, into government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs), a common phenomenon among oppressive regimes that aim to undermine the capabilities of civil society and to impose total state control over its institutions to achieve their own political and economic goals. The Syrian regime has also created a civil society organization in the STD whose only purpose in existing is to whitewash and promote the regime's image. Furthermore, the report highlighted how the Syrian regime has promoted the SARC and the STD to make them exclusive partners with the UN agencies and donor states. These two organizations have been used as exclusive gateway to receive international support from UN agencies and donor states, and to support the Central Bank with hard currency and to seize vast sums of money from the international community, despite the sanctions imposed on the regime. SNHR called on donor states to ensure that aid is delivered to those who truly need it regardless of their political affiliations. This can be achieved, the report explained, by imposing effective control mechanisms over the projects being funded and by communicating with organizations receiving those funds in an independent and impartial way to ensure that those organizations are distributing aid properly, and to ensure that executive partners in projects in Syria are not subject to sanctions or associated with figures subject to sanctions or figures accused of committing grave human rights violations.

B. Attempts to restore relations with the Syrian regime that is involved in crimes against humanity against the Syrian people

The year 2023 saw a number of states and international organizations taking some steps to restore relations with the Syrian regime, building on similar efforts made in 2021 and 2022. Relatedly, [on March 17, 2023, the OHCHR released a statement](#) noting that, 12 years into the conflict, Syria is still deeply divided, with the people being bombed by the regime, in addition to many other forces and active parties committing violations against the country's people. The statement concluded by stressing that the interests of the Syrian people must be prioritized and every effort should be made to reach a peaceful, negotiated resolution in order to put Syria on a path towards a stable, preposterous, and just future for all Syrians.

A notable attempt to normalize relations with the regime was the participation of the Syrian regime's delegation in the Arab League's meetings, ignoring the regime's horrific violations that constituted crimes against humanity against the Syrian people. Such attempts also turn a blind eye to the fact that the Syrian regime has insulted the Arab League and violated all of its initiatives proposed to resolve the Syrian conflict, which the regime obviously did not commit to. The Syrian regime has been committing gross violations against the Syrian people, some of which constitute crimes against humanity, since the very first months of the popular uprising that began in March 2011. SNHR underlines that the reasons that led to the regime's dismissal of the Arab League, the state of isolation imposed by the democratic states of the world, and the imposition of sanctions on the regime are still very much present, and have actually further accumulated for nearly 13 years, with mounting deaths and a vastly increased magnitude of atrocities, [which we stressed in a statement released on April 20](#). Furthermore, [on September 22, Paulo Pinheiro, Chair of the COI, noted in his address at the 54th Session of the UNHRC](#) that the war in Syria has not ended yet, and that the country is still unsafe for the return of refugees. Mr. Pinheiro reiterated that "Nearly twelve years in, the parties to this conflict continue to perpetrate war crimes and to violate basic human rights." He also noted that normalizing relations with the Syrian regime in the absence of clear and tangible benchmarks is no way to break the deadlock, and might even doom Syrians to more suffering, destruction, and bloodshed. On September 6, [the French Newspaper Lemonde reported](#) that, despite the attempts made by Arab states to normalize diplomatic relations with the Syrian regime, 80 percent of Syrians are still living under the poverty line. The newspaper added that three months after the Syrian regime had been granted readmission into the Arab League, protests against the regime broke out in southern Syria. The newspaper also criticized the Syrian regime's readmission into the Arab League for lacking any initiative to revive a comprehensive political process, pointing out that this only protracts the suffering of Syrians, as the regime's political maneuvering has failed to conceal its inability to maintain any form of a true internal stability.

Meanwhile, on June 18, [the EU released a statement](#) stressing that the conditions for the EU to restore relations with the Syrian regime and change its position on Syria have not been met. The statement draws upon SNHR's data which confirms that violations continue to be perpetrated in the country. Lastly, on February 14, 2024, [the US Congress passed the 'Assad Regime Anti-Normalization Act of 2023'](#), which prohibits the recognition of any Syrian government headed by Bashar Assad, and provides for the extension of the Caesar Syrian Civilian Protect Act.

Restoring relations with the Syrian regime, which is still involved in crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, is violation of international law and a desecration of the rights of million victims. The attempts being made by some Arab states, or any other states for that matter, to reestablish any form of relations with the Syrian regime are grievously insulting, first and foremost to those states deciding to take such action, and secondly sends a wrong message to its people that it choose to side with said regime which has committed crimes against humanity and sits atop the backs and skulls of its millions of victims. Therefore, any such restoration of relations constitutes an expression of support for all the Syrian regime's previous and continuing violations against the Syrian people, since opposing such horrific violations which are classified as crimes against humanity and war crimes is, under international law, a core part of the responsibilities of all the world's states as ratifiers of the Geneva Convention.

V. 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.⁶¹
- 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 simultaneously systematic and widespread manner. 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 UN 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 shameful Western silence.
- The Syrian regime has practiced torture in a widespread and systematic manner. Torture practices have led to violations as severe as the loss of life, constituting blatant violations of international human rights law. It has also been well-established that the Syrian regime is fully aware of these practices, as well as the fact that the inhumane detention conditions will eventually lead to death. Furthermore, the Syrian regime has made the conscious decision to carry out these practices from the very top of the regime's power hierarchy, starting with the President of the Republic, who directly controls the ministries of interior and defense, the National Security Bureau, and their various subsidiary security agencies and security and military committees.
- There are no legal grounds for convicting detainees and leveling charges against them, whether on the basis of the Counterterrorism Law or the Public Penal Code, with rulings usually being based on confessions extracted under torture and coercion. These are not courts in any recognized legal and judicial sense.

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

- The Syrian regime has eroded the state judiciary's authority, placing it under its own full control, doing the same with the state's legislative authority. In effect, there is today only one ruling authority, namely the executive authority, which is in the hands of the head of the republic and the security agencies that report to him. The Syrian regime is a bona fide dictatorial, totalitarian regime which explicitly and blatantly violates the principle of the separation of powers.
- The Military Field Court is not an independent court (there is no separation of powers), nor is it impartial. The fact that it was not established according to the rule of law means that it contravenes many texts in international human rights law (mainly Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), and international humanitarian law. The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that any criminal conviction issued by a body that is not an independent and impartial court and was not founded in accordance with the law does not fulfill the requirements of Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- The states whose representatives attended the 2005 World Summit⁶² unanimously affirmed their responsibility to protect their own populations from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, and 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 manner⁶³.
- 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,⁶⁴ according to customary international law.⁶⁵
- The region of northwestern Syria hosts the largest proportion of IDPs who have been displaced as a direct result of the violations perpetrated by the regime and its allies. The Syrian regime has denied these IDPs basic services and completely abandoned its responsibilities towards them. Even worse, regime forces have been bombarding IDPs areas for years, and have even obstructed the delivery of humanitarian assistance into those areas, while pillaging the overwhelming majority of the relief aid intended for IDPs.

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

63. *ibid.*

64. Fourth Geneva Convention, [Article 23](#)
Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, [Articles 68, 69, 70, 71](#)
Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, [Article 8](#)
Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, [Article 18](#)

65. "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.

- 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.
- The provision of humanitarian assistance, which is a noble endeavor, should not be debased by being turned into a means of funding and supporting a regime involved in crimes against humanity against the country's people.
- The legislative process in Syria has been stripped of all standards regulating legislation, especially those related to conflicts. This process has also contravened constitutional and legal articles in many of the articles of legislation that have been promulgated. The legislative authority, i.e., the People's Assembly of Syria, lacks any autonomy and is completely subservient to the executive branch in every way, from appointing its members to controlling the laws passed by it.
- Most of the real estate laws adopted by the Syrians regime violate many fundamental human rights, through confiscating properties, increasing taxes and fees, and requiring security clearance for many real estate transactions.
- The vast extent of the destruction monitored on the ground unequivocally confirms that the regime has consistently deliberately aimed to destroy any real estate property that it failed to seize in order to force their owners to leave first, and then to ensure that they never return.
- The frequent nature of the regime's issuance of amnesty decrees, which are not aimed at securing the release of political prisoners, only harms the state's penal policies, since these decrees lead to the release of thousands of actual offenders. The exceptionally frequent issuance of these amnesty decrees also leads to many dysfunctions in court procedures at all levels. At this point, many judges are deferring their decisions on legal rulings in numerous cases since they may be included in future decrees.
- The Syrian regime has violated Principle 21 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.⁶⁶
- Profiteering from the issuance and renewal of Syrian passports is one of the regime's main sources of income, earning it hundreds of millions of dollars annually, helping fund its devastating war against the Syrian people, and aiding in consolidating and sustaining the regime's power.
- The Syrian regime has been practicing systematic and calculated violations against Syrians wishing to obtain passports, including turning Immigration and Passport Departments into centers for persecuting and arresting dissidents, deliberately degrading and humiliating citizens, and leaving them easy prey for middlemen, fraudsters, and forgers. This is in addition to the regime's frequent disruptions to the legitimate operations of the Immigration and Passport Department, which have often undermined the situation of Syrians, especially those living abroad.

66. United Nations, [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements](#)

- 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.
- 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.
- Russia has used its veto powers 14 times since the beginning of its direct military intervention despite its status as a party to the Syrian conflict, which violates the UN Charter. Furthermore, the use of veto powers has been exploited by the Syrian regime to protect its impunity, affording it absolute protection. In this, the use of veto powers has been arbitrary and in opposition to human rights.
- 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.
- Commanders and other superior officers are criminally responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates pursuant to their orders,⁶⁷ if they knew, or had reason to know, that the subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible.⁶⁸
- The repercussions of the cumulative and continuous catastrophic violations over 13 years have caused and intensified the collapse of the Syrian state because the Syrian regime is embedded in it as a cancerous tumor fatally poisoning the entire body and will not accept any political transition even if Syria turns into the world's most catastrophically failed state, leading to the fragmentation of Syrian society and the displacement of millions more people.
- The UN Security Council is the main body responsible for the state of absence of security in Syria in light of its utter failure to protect civilians over the past 13 years, and its failure to bring about a political transition. As the conflict goes on, so does the devolution into anarchy, criminality, and illegal acts.

67. "Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed pursuant to their orders." - International Committee of the Red Cross, Rule 152 of customary international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule152>

68. "Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates if they knew, or had reason to know, that the subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible." - International Committee of the Red Cross, Rule 153 of the customary international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule153>

Recommendations:

UN Security Council and the United Nations:

- 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 113,000 persons forcibly disappeared in Syria, 86 percent of them by the Syrian regime. Also, call on the Syrian regime to disclose names of detainees and publish lists of their sentences, while also explaining the method by which those sentences were arrived in light of the absolute hegemony of the executive and security apparatus over the judiciary, and mainly the Counterterrorism Court.
- Work to reveal the fate of forcibly disappeared persons in tandem with, or before the launch of, new rounds of the political process. This must be done in accordance with a strict timetable.
- Be wary of accepting the claims made by the regime about its amnesty decrees, which lack any credibility both in theory and practice, and call for the release of detainees whose arrest and detention are based on false grounds with no evidence. Rather, these prisoners have been arrested for rightfully demanding their right to political change and expression.
- It is impossible to address the roots of the real estate issue in Syria so long as the Syrian regime remains in power since it is the main reason behind these complications. Indeed, a political transition will be the first step towards resolving the real estate issue in Syria.
- 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 13 years, intervene militarily in order to protect Syrian civilians.
- Some UN Security Council member states must stop using their veto powers to shield the Syrian regime that has committed hundreds of thousands of violations over the past 13 years, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- 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 13 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.
- Follow up on the claims about the Iranian regime continuing to supply the regime with weaponry, equipment, and manpower.
- 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.
- Coordinate with human rights groups to support the process of documenting the decrees and laws promulgated by the regime, expose the extent to which these laws contravene international human rights law, and condemn all their ramifications.
- Abstain from using the concept of sovereignty as an excuse for inaction and take action to redress the invocation of the Security Council's arbitrary powers at the expense of international law, especially in regard to humanitarian aid.
- Refuse to enter into exclusive partnerships with the bodies dictated by the regime to distribute aid, namely the SARC and the STD, and reject the regime security forces' control over the implementation of projects and over who benefits from said projects, and other forms of extortions practiced by the Syrian regime on UN agencies in order to direct aid in its favor.
- Allocate a significant amount of funds for clearing live mines left over by the Syrian conflict from the United Nations Mine Action Service, particularly in areas prepared to carry out this task with transparency and integrity.

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.
- Act more urgently in regard to bringing about a political resolution that would enable the Syrian people to hold free and fair political, parliamentary, and local elections that respect the rules of the electoral process.
- Condemn the laws issued by the Syrian regime that violate the rights of millions of Syrian people, which are being enforced under the threat of arms and authority.
- Take serious punitive actions against the Syrian regime to deter it from killing Syrian citizens under torture. Also, apply pressure on the other parties to the conflict through all available means to completely end all torture practices.
- The states ratifying the Geneva Conventions have the obligation of fighting crimes against humanity and war crimes. States that have universal jurisdiction must play a larger role in filing cases against perpetrators of violations in Syria.

Parties to the conflict

- Comply with the rules of customary humanitarian law and UN 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.
- Call for rapid implementation of democratic political change that restores victims' rights and embodies the principles of transitional justice.
- Clearly assign responsibility to the party responsible for the death of the political process, and disclose to the Syrian people the timing of the end of the political transition process.

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 respect for basic rights, and any citizen may be subjected to arrest under ludicrously vague and excessively 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.
- Reject viewing the Russian government as part of the dialogue and political transition in Syria should the Russian regime persist in perpetrating widespread and systematic violations against the Syrian people. The use of cluster munitions is clear evidence of the Russian regime's violations.

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:

- End all attempts to normalize relations with the Syrian regime. Should some of the Arab states believe they are compelled to pursue normalization, they must require as a precondition: 1. The release of approximately 136,000 political detainees, including 96,000 forcibly disappeared persons; 2. the disclosure of the fate of victims of torture and execution practices in regime detention centers, as well as details of their burial; and 3. allow the launch of an independent accountability process for all Syrian regime personnel involved in crimes of murder and torture, no matter their security and military ranks and positions.

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.



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



info@snhr.org
www.snhr.org

No justice without accountability

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March 2024

