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The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in July 2021

The Syrian Regime's Checkpoints
Obstruct the Entry of Food and
Medical Supplies to Daraa
al Balad Area and the Tareeq al
Sadd and Camps Neighborhoods

Wednesday 4 August 2021

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

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I. Introduction and Methodology:

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report focuses on the human rights situation in Syria, which SNHR documented in July 2021, and catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights attacks on civilian objects, which SNHR's team was able to document during this period. To find out more about our working [methodology](#) in documenting and archiving data, please visit the following link that explains this in detail.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Summary of the Most Notable Events in July 2021:

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

July saw the continuation of [military operations](#) [in northwest](#) Syria for the second [consecutive month](#), with [these operations](#) concentrated in [the Jabal al Zaweya](#) area and its [surroundings](#), in [particular through](#) ground [bombardment](#) by [the Syrian-Russian](#) alliance forces on [the area](#). During this month, the Syrian Network for Human Rights encountered difficulty in identifying whether the source of bombardment could be attributed specifically to Russian forces or Syrian regime forces, in several incidents, which are still under investigation up to the time of publication. We also documented the use of several different types of munitions, most notably those guided by the Russian-made Krasnopol laser system, which is characterized by its precise targeting, in addition to the use of new munitions that have not yet been identified. Russian reconnaissance aircraft were also frequently seen in the airspace over the region throughout the month.



In July, the western suburbs of Aleppo also saw several incidents of bombardment by Syrian regime forces, which [caused human](#) and [material losses](#).

On July 3, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) confirmed [in a statement](#) that six children were killed and others wounded in several attacks targeting three villages south of Idlib in northwest Syria in one day. Ted Chaiban, UNICEF's Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said: ["These attacks are the worst since a ceasefire was brokered in March last year. An escalation of violence will only result in cutting short the lives of more children."](#) In [another statement](#), he issued on July 15, he spoke about the deaths of 10 children in the last two weeks in northwest Syria, and expressed his fear of violence returning in Syria.

On July 18, Save the Children condemned, [in a statement](#), the killing of at least 13 children within a three-day period in northwest Syria.

On July 23, Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, [expressed](#) grave concern about the escalation of violence in northwest Syria, stressing that this poses a growing risk to civilians.

On July 23, Mark Cutts, Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, [in a tweet](#) on his Twitter account, condemned the continued bombardment of northwest Syria by the Syrian regime and Russia, with more civilian casualties.

On July 31, Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, [called on](#) all parties in Syria to recognize that "the principle of the protection of civilians and international humanitarian law must be upheld," also calling on all parties to "deescalate".

Syrian-Russian alliance forces' bombardment of northwest Syria was countered with shelling by armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, in addition to Turkish forces, whose shelling was concentrated on the Jourin military camp in the northwestern suburbs of Hama and other military locations housing Syrian regime forces and their allies in the villages and towns controlled by the regime in the southern suburbs of Idlib and the suburbs of Ma'aret al Numan, which are uninhabited areas.

According to the Russian TASS news agency on July 14, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu [said](#) during a meeting with employees of the Russian helicopter manufacturer Rosvertol: "We tested more than 320 types of different weapons in Syria."

The Syrian regime continued to besiege the Daraa al Balad area, the Tareeq al Sadd and Camps neighborhoods in Daraa city; on July 4, Syrian regime forces closed the only remaining road leading to the area, obstructed the entry of food and medical supplies to it, and imposed strict restrictions on the movement of residents' to or from these areas, until July 24, when an agreement was reached between these forces and the negotiating committees to end the siege imposed on the area for nearly a month, in exchange for the people there handing over some light weapons to the Syrian regime, and accepting a security settlement for nearly 200 individuals, and the installation of three military points there. Subsequently, the Syrian regime army's Fourth and Ninth divisions stormed al Shayyah area in the southern plains of the Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city and the Gharz area in the eastern part of the city, while regime forces brought reinforcements provided with armored vehicles to the outskirts of Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood and the camps in the

city of Daraa on July 27, 2021, under the pretext of setting up the three military points included in the agreement. Syrian regime forces escalated their operations after meeting with resistance from fighters in the area, and bombarded several areas in the governorate, [resulting in the deaths](#) of [at least 11 civilians](#), including [five children](#) and one woman, as well as arresting at least 13 civilians. [In a recent statement](#), the Syrian Network for Human Rights condemned this military escalation, and we will soon issue a detailed report on the recent events in Daraa governorate.

On July 30, the Office of the Spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary-General [expressed](#) concern over reports of civilian casualties in Daraa, and the risk of further escalation. On the same day, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Imran Riza, and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Muhannad Hadi, issued [a joint statement](#) in which they stressed the need to protect civilians and infrastructure from attacks.

On July 30, the US Department of State [expressed](#) its concern about the situation in Daraa and the human rights reports stating that civilians are being killed, with thousands of others displaced.

In July, the Badiya (desert area) of al Mayadeen in the southern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour saw hit-and-run clashes between Syrian regime forces and affiliated militias against ISIS, without any change in the distribution of zones of control. The Badiya of al Boukamal city in Deir Ez-Zour suburbs also saw several air raids by US-led coalition warplanes, targeting several buildings used as headquarters by the Iranian regime's so-called Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) militia. These raids killed many members of the militia and destroyed several headquarters structures.

Also in July, clashes continued between Syrian National Army forces and Syrian Democratic Forces in the villages of Ein Eisa in the northern suburbs of Raqqa, which are under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, resulting in deaths on both sides without any change in the distribution of zones of control. We note that this area has witnessed intermittent clashes between the two parties since 2019.

Afrin city in the [northern suburbs](#) of Aleppo was [bombarded](#) by Syrian Democratic Forces in July, resulting in [the deaths](#) of civilians, with the bombardment also causing damage to infrastructure.

In terms of bombings, Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka and Tal Abyad city in the northwestern suburbs of Raqqa both saw bombings that caused material damage to the infrastructure.

July saw a [continuation](#) of [civilian deaths](#) due to [landmine explosions](#) in different governorates and regions of Syria. SNHR documented many landmine explosions, which resulted in the death of eight civilians, including five children, bringing the death toll from this cause in 2021 to 117 victims, including 44 children and 21 women.

In July, we also recorded a continuation of assassinations in many areas, including the villages and towns in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa, which resulted in the death of a number of civilians at the hands of unidentified gunmen believed to be affiliated with ISIS.

On July 19, [al Sfirra area in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo](#) was subjected to Israeli airstrikes targeting Syrian regime forces' sites. On July 22, an Israeli [airstrike was launched on al Qsair city](#) in the suburbs of Homs, according to the Syrian Arab News Agency - SANA.

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian regime forces continued in July to persecute and arrest individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status with the Syrian regime in areas that had previously concluded settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. We recorded random incidents of arrests of citizens in Damascus Suburbs governorate and Damascus city, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests, which we believe were based on malicious security reports issued due to the targeted individuals' opposition to the Syrian regime, including individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status. In addition, we recorded random arrests targeting civilians, including elderly people, which were concentrated in [many areas of Daraa governorate](#) over the deteriorating security situation, the residents' rejection of the security presence of regime forces in the residents' areas, and during Syrian regime forces' storming of a number of homes in the besieged neighborhoods of Daraa al Balad and a number of Daraa city neighborhoods, with these operations being accompanied by looting and destruction of the homes' contents. Daraa governorate saw the highest number of arrests in July, in conjunction with the military campaign carried out by Syrian regime forces against some areas of Daraa.

On July 13, the [United Nations Human Rights Council issued a resolution](#) calling for justice for tens of thousands of Syrians who went missing during the decade-long Syrian conflict. The resolution, proposed by [the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey and the United States](#), was adopted by a majority of 26 votes, while six countries opposed, including Russia and China, and 15 abstained.

Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in July, with the number increasing this month as SDF continued carrying out campaigns of mass raids and arrests, targeting civilians on the supposed pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters. We also documented arrests targeting media workers and members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, with these arrests being concentrated in Hasaka governorate, as well as documenting arrests of workers in civil society organizations in Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

On July 1, the United States, through the Twitter account of the US Embassy in Damascus, [expressed](#) its deep concern at reports of the activist Amin Eisa al Ali's death in the SDF's Ghwayran prison in Hasaka, and called for an immediate and transparent investigation. We had [issued a brief report on the incident](#) on the 30th of June.

July also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham detaining civilians, with these arrests concentrated in Idlib governorate. We also documented arrests carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham after local residents in al Sahhara village in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate refused to agree to the HTS' Salvation government's appointment of an Imam at a mosque in the village.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in July, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting individuals coming from areas controlled by the Syrian regime. In addition, we documented detentions carried out under an ethnic pretext, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army's control in Aleppo governorate.

Regarding living conditions:

On July 11, Bashar al Assad, the Syrian regime's President issued Legislative Decrees [No. 19](#) and [No. 20](#), with the first decree increasing pensions by 50% on the fixed salaries and wages in force for both civil and military workers, and raising the general minimum wage and the minimum wage for professions for workers in the private, cooperative and joint sectors not covered by provisions of the basic law for state workers, bringing it to 71,515 Syrian pounds (about \$23) per month. Meanwhile, the second decree stipulated an increase of 40% to the retirement pension for military and civilian personnel. In parallel with these two decrees, and on the same day, the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection issued a [decision](#) to raise the price of a liter of diesel to 500 Syrian pounds, with the retail price of a bundle of bread set at 200 Syrian pounds. We note that the increase in salaries is inadequate to cover the increased prices of diesel and bread, and that despite the increase in salaries, the citizen will receive smaller amounts of both items.

In addition, [the Syrian regime's Fodder Corporation increased](#) the price of yellow maize by 16%, from 910,000 Syrian pounds to 1.05 million Syrian pounds, and ready-made fodder for dairy cows by 60%, from 600,000 Syrian pounds to 910,000 Syrian pounds, which will be reflected in the price of broilers, milk and their derivatives for the consumer.

In the context of irresponsible statements made by officials in the Syrian regime, Ziad Hazaa, director of the General Bakery Corporation, [was quoted as stating](#) in an interview in an article published by Cham Times on July 11: "I do not think that a family of five members consumes more than one bundle of bread per day." ignoring the deteriorating living situation throughout Syria and the fact that this bread is the main foodstuff for thousands of families.

Meanwhile, farmers in several areas [expressed](#) their dissatisfaction at not receiving payments due to them for the grain crops that they had handed over to the Syrian regime's General Establishment for Grain Trading, Storing and Manufacturing, since last June. On July 4, al Watan newspaper quoted Yousef Qasem, director of the Syrian Grain Corporation, as saying that the delay in the disbursement of wheat values by agricultural banks may be the result of restrictions in the movement of funds and cash that are jointly managed between the Central Bank and the Agricultural Bank.

On July 23, [Saudi authorities announced](#) that they had thwarted an attempt to smuggle more than 2.1 million Captagon pills that were hidden inside packages of "tomato molasses" coming from Syria. We note that recent years have witnessed dozens of smuggling operations of narcotic drugs that have been thwarted by countries in the region. On July 19, the British Economist website published a [report](#) in which it said that Syria had turned into a narco-state, with Captagon pills being its main export material.

The intense heatwave witnessed in all regions of Syria caused major fires to break out in forested areas in western areas of Jisr al Shoghour in the western suburbs of Idlib, for the second month in a row, causing material losses to crops.

In light of the rising temperatures, the neighborhoods of Hasaka city saw disruptions in the supply of drinking water caused by the suspension of work at the water pumping station in Allouk in Ras al Ein area due to electrical technical faults that lasted from the 29th of June until the 25th of July, during which time the people were forced to buy water from the tanks scattered in the city, with the price of one barrel of water reaching nearly two thousand Syrian pounds. On July 15, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Imran Riza, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Muhannad Hadi and UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Ted Chaiban, issued [a joint statement](#) warning of the danger facing one million people due to severe interruptions to Allouk Water Station.

The areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour have also been suffering in the summer, particularly in light of the power cuts and the inability of electric power generators (known as amperes) to operate refrigerators, in addition to suffering from a crisis in obtaining ice and preserving foodstuffs, as well as enduring a continuing crisis of struggling to provide bread due to the high prices for a sack of flour, the lack of operating bakeries and the high production costs.

In July, we recorded several cases of suicide in all regions of Syria, most of them by young men. The phenomenon of foundlings abandoned by their families has also spread in public places, and we believe that the deteriorating living conditions are the main cause in all these cases.

In regard to the COVID-19 pandemic:

July also saw the continuation of recording infections and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we have monitored an unprecedented reduction in the statistics of infections and deaths declared by all parties in Syria since nearly a year ago, in conjunction with the promotion of vaccine doses that have become available in the country.

On July 18, Dr. Nabough al Awa, a member of the coronavirus advisory committee, told the regime-loyalist [Melody Radio](#) station that: "Delta mutator is present among us, and Corona infections have reappeared in clinics." He called for adherence to self-precautionary measures.

The Syrian regime's [Ministry of Health](#) officially announced 448 cases of COVID-19 infection and 38 deaths in July, bringing the official total announced to 25,963 cases of infection with 1,914 deaths, as of July 31.

In northwestern Syria, more infections and deaths due to coronavirus were recorded in July, with [the Early Warning Alert and Response Network \(EWARN\)](#) announcing the documentation of 771 infections and 13 deaths related to COVID-19 for the month; this brought the total number of infections and deaths announced by EWARN as of July 31, to 26,432 cases of infection and 722 deaths.

As of July 31, a total of 18,689 coronavirus infection cases, including 768 deaths, had been announced by [the Health Authority in the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria](#). We note that 179 cases of infection and five deaths were recorded in July.

In regard to asylum, displacement and forced displacement:

The suffering of camp residents in northern and eastern Syria continued in July, especially in light of the extremely high temperatures. We also documented numerous fires breaking out in the camps, particularly in Idlib suburbs, causing the death of a child, with most of these accidents caused by the improper use of cooking fuel and the explosion of solar batteries.

On July 4, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published [a tweet](#) on its official account, attached to a video, in which it stated that the families are returning to Qal'at al Madiq in the Hama suburbs after years of displacement, noting that "the needs are huge and people need to start from scratch." The video showed empty homes and destroyed vehicles, in addition to the presence of military vehicles that we believe belong to the Syrian regime inside some stores. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights stress that the areas under the control of the Syrian regime cannot be considered to constitute a safe haven for its residents, and, a fortiori, they are not a safe haven for the return of refugees or IDPs. There will be no stability or safety in the presence of the same security services, which have committed crimes against humanity since 2011 and continue to do so to this day.

On July 15, Syrian Democratic Forces allowed the seventeenth group¹ of IDPs to date, consisting of approximately 299 people from Raqqa governorate, to leave al Hawl Camp² and return to their villages and towns. Also, during July, al Hawl Camp saw [the deaths of seven IDPs in the camp at the hands of unknown gunmen](#), including three women. We note that Fabrizio Carboni, ICRC Near and Middle East Regional Director, [stated](#) on June 30 that: "Boys in particular live in a state of constant fear and mistrust. Once they reach a certain age, many are separated from their families and transferred to adult places of detention, which are no place for children."

On July 19, [Save the Children](#) welcomed the repatriation of some 26 children and a number of their mothers from camps in northeast Syria to Belgium, Kosovo, Finland and North Macedonia over the previous four days.

On July 26, Chief of the Russian National Center for State Defense Control Colonel General Mikhail Mizintsev, [said](#) at the refugee conference held in Damascus, according to the Russian TASS news agency: "To date, more than 2.278.000 Syrian citizens have already returned to their homes, over 1.362.000 of them were internally displaced persons, while more than 915.000 refugees came from abroad". Meanwhile, Hussein Makhlof, the Syri-

¹ Following the decision 146 issued by Syrian Democratic Forces' Self-Management Authority on October 10, 2020, allowing Syrians in the camp to leave after completing the necessary procedures

² A camp located east of Hasaka city, near the Iraq-Syrian border, which houses nearly 60 000 people

an regime's Minister of Local Administration, stated at the same conference that the number of displaced people who have returned to Syria since 2011 has reached five million. The two incompatible statements come in light of [successive UNHCR statistics](#) indicating an increase in the number of refugees and IDPs, the last of which was in March 2021. This confirms the falsity of the claims promoted by the regime and its allies that large numbers of refugees are returning to an unsafe area that lacks the most basic necessities of life.

In Lebanon, [the National News Agency reported](#) on July 4 that two fires that broke out in two Syrian refugee camps in the towns of Benin and al Hamra in the Akkar region of northern Lebanon caused only material damage to the tents. [Another fire broke out](#) on July 12 in another camp for Syrian refugees near the Lebanese town of Brital.

Renewing the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism into Syria:

On July 9, the Security Council voted unanimously to extend the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism to Syria through the Bab al Hawa border crossing with Turkey for a period of 6 months, subject to automatic extension for another six months, after an assessment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the delivery of aid. On July 8, we at the Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a report entitled "[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", in which we noted that the Syrian regime, which is accused of stealing and looting humanitarian aid, obstructing its access, and besieging and starving entire areas, cannot be trusted.

On July 9, the Head of [Amnesty International's](#) UN office, Sherine Tadros, commenting on UN Resolution 2585, said: "This compromise resolution is once again an example of Russia ignoring the humanitarian needs of Syrians, and instead playing political games with the lives and welfare of millions of people."

On the political and human rights level:

On July 2, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published a group of 37 photos of heads of state and government who crack down massively on press freedom, calling them "predators of press freedom" in the 2021 list. The organization [stated](#) that Bashar al Assad has been and remains one of the most prominent predators in the gallery since its first list.

On July 4, [the Swiss newspaper](#) SonntagsZeitung revealed that Germany had exported chemicals to Syria in 2014, that may have been used in the production of chemical weapons. The newspaper pointed out that the German group Brenntag supplied a shipment of isopropanol and Diethylamine to the Mediterranean Pharmaceutical Industries company in Syria, with these being essential ingredients in the production of the sarin chemical warfare agent. It was noted that the pharmaceutical company received 20% of the sent shipment, which means that it is likely that the rest of the shipment was used by the Syrian regime in the production of chemical weapons.

On July 7, the 16th round of [Astana talks](#) on Syria began in the Kazakh capital of Nur Sultan, with the talks lasting two days, in the presence of the delegations of the Syrian regime and the opposition, in addition to the three guarantor states, namely Russia, Turkey and Iran. The final statement stressed the need to push the political process in Syria forward and called on the United Nations to extend the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism.

On July 12, the United Nations Development Program in Syria announced, via its Facebook account, the launch of the annual international competition for the Hult prize - known as the 'Nobel Prize for students' - with the participation of all Syria's universities, in cooperation with the Syrian regime's Ministry of Higher Education and the Student Union in Syria. [In a statement](#), the Syrian Network for Human Rights expressed its concern at the United Nations Development Program being linked with an entity involved in gross human rights violations, considering this to be an expression of involvement in and support for these violations.

On July 22, [the US Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#) (FDD) revealed that the United Nations agencies spent \$14.9 million last year on housing and other services at the Four Seasons Damascus hotel, which has been subject to US Treasury Department sanctions since 2019, with the FDD accusing the United Nations of not carrying out oversight activities to please the allies of the Syrian regime's President, primarily Russia.

On July 23, the Russian Ministry of Defense [announced](#) in a statement that it would sign 10 agreements with the Syrian regime on the sidelines of the conference on 'the return of Syrian refugees', and would supply the regime with more than 160 tons of humanitarian aid. Signing these agreements is a violation of US sanctions imposed on Syria.

On July 26, the work of the Syrian-Russian joint meeting to follow up on the work of the international conference on 'the return of Syrian refugees and IDPs' [began](#) at the Conferences Palace in Damascus, with the event lasting for three days in the presence of a large Russian delegation. [The final statement of the meeting](#) stipulated several points, includ-

ing an assertion by the Syrian and Russian sides that: "the return of the displaced Syrians is a national priority for the Syrian state" and that "the necessity of reconstruction and liquidation of terrorist hotbeds and remnants in parallel with the efforts made by the Syrian state to secure what is needed for the returning Syrian displaced."

On July 26, the Chief of the Russian National Center for State Defense Control, Colonel General Mikhail Mizintsev, announced on the sidelines of the conference on 'the return of Syrian refugees': "Thanks to the efforts made by the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute for the History of Material Culture and Department of Antiquities and Museums of Syria's representatives, the crucial work on the study and preservation of Syria's cultural heritage sites and such monuments of world culture as Palmyra has begun."

We note that the Russian regime has shown great interest in Syrian antiquities recently, despite being accused along with its Syrian ally of bombing dozens of archaeological sites in Syria. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights have been working for months on a report on the reality of archaeological sites in Syria and the sabotage they have been subjected to during the last ten years.

On July 27, Save the Children warned in [a report](#) that children in Raqqa city are still living among ruins, with limited water, electricity, and access to education, four years after Syrian Democratic Forces took control of the city. The organization estimated that the number of people who have returned to the city since 2017, ranges from 270,000 to 330,000 people, noting that the levels of rebuilding and rehabilitation of houses remain low, with children living in constant fear of their homes collapsing on top of them, especially since 36% of the city's buildings remain entirely destroyed.

On the course of advocacy and the pursuit of accountability:

On July 14, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) submitted a report to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), for the second time since the outbreak of the popular uprising in March 2011, as part of our contribution as 'Other Stakeholders' to the documents for the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which will contribute to the summary presented by the OHCHR at the fortieth session, to be held in January and February 2022. We have issued [a statement](#) in this regard.

On July 15, nine members of the European Parliament sent [a letter to](#) the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs calling for work to end the siege on Daraa, in which they cited [a statement](#) issued by the Syrian Network for Human Rights on the siege.

On July 16, a Dutch court sentenced [Syrian refugee](#), Ahmad. Kh to 20 years in prison in the first trial of its kind in the Netherlands, for a war crime (captive killing). He was acquitted of the charge of participating in a terrorist organization, while he was a leader in the Ghurabaa Mohassan (Strangers of Mohassan) armed group. We note that Ahmad was arrested by the Dutch authorities in May 2019.

On July 28, the [US Department](#) of the Treasury, for the first time since US President Biden took office, imposed sanctions on eight individuals and 10 entities in Syria, including the Seydnaya Military Prison and al Khatib Branch.

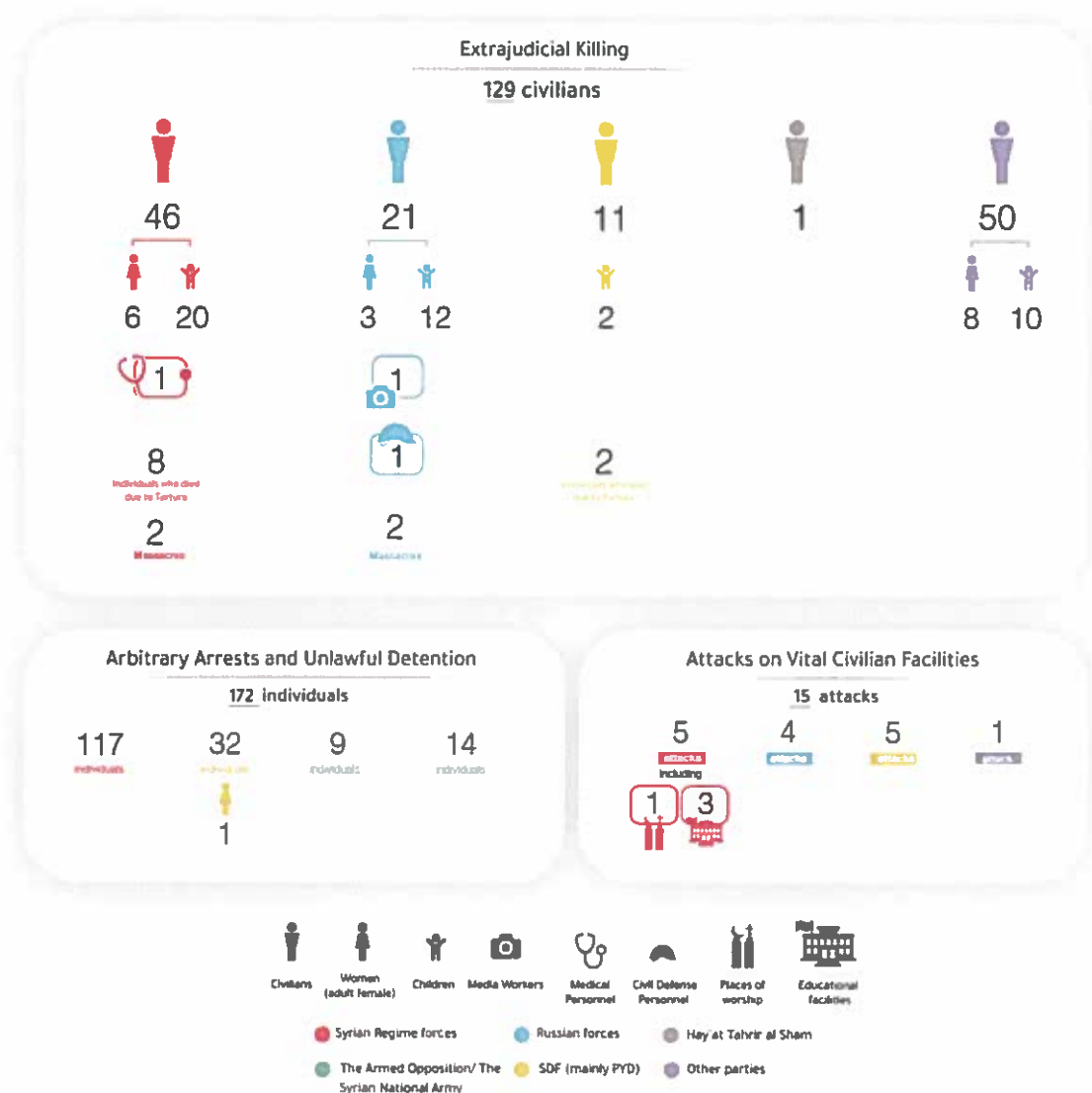
On July 28, the website of the Office of the German Federal Public Prosecutor published the indictment of the Syrian doctor Alaa. M, which was addressed by the [German Public Prosecutor](#) in the city of Frankfurt to the Supreme Court in Frankfurt, on July 15, which includes accusations of crimes against humanity and causing serious bodily injuries against detainees held by the Syrian regime. We note that the accused arrived in mid-2015 in Germany, where he worked as a doctor, and was arrested in June 2020 based on [reports of him violating human rights](#) and is still in pretrial detention.

On July 29, the Dutch Council of State issued a ruling prohibiting the deportation of Syrian refugees coming from Greece, even if they had previously obtained a residence permit there, due to the difficult conditions in which the refugees live there. The ruling came in a lawsuit filed by Syrian refugees coming from Greece, to which the Dutch immigration authorities intended to return them, and the ruling will be applied to all similar cases.

In July, the Syrian Network for Human Rights briefed the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, as well as briefing the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health on four cases of enforced disappearance, while also briefing both the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions and the UN Special Rapporteur on torture on two cases of extrajudicial killings.

III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in July:

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in July 2021 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.



A. Extrajudicial Killing:

In July 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of 129 civilians, including 44 children and 17 women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces; among the victims were one medical worker, one Civil Defense worker, and one media worker. We also documented 10 individuals who died due to torture. We also recorded at least four massacres. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in July at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shilte foreign militias)³** : 46 civilians, including 20 children and six women.
- **Russian forces:** 21 civilians, including 12 children and three women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham⁴** : One civilian.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 11 civilians, including two children.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 50 civilians, including 10 children and eight women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown source: Eight civilians, including five children.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 35 civilians, including two children and eight women.
- Killings by unknown persons: Six civilians, including two children.
- Turkish border guards: One child.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In July 2021, SNHR documented at least 172 cases of arbitrary arrests, including one woman (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian regime forces in the governorate of Daraa then Damascus Suburbs. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in July at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

³ We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria.

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

⁴ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

The record of cases of arbitrary arrests was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

Syrian Regime forces: 117.

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: Nine.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army: 14.

Syrian Democratic Forces: 32, including one woman.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

In July 2021, SNHR documented at least 15 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, nine of which were at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces, and which were concentrated in Idlib governorate.

Among these attacks, we documented three on educational facilities and one on a place of worship.

These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Five.
- **Russian forces:** Four.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Five.

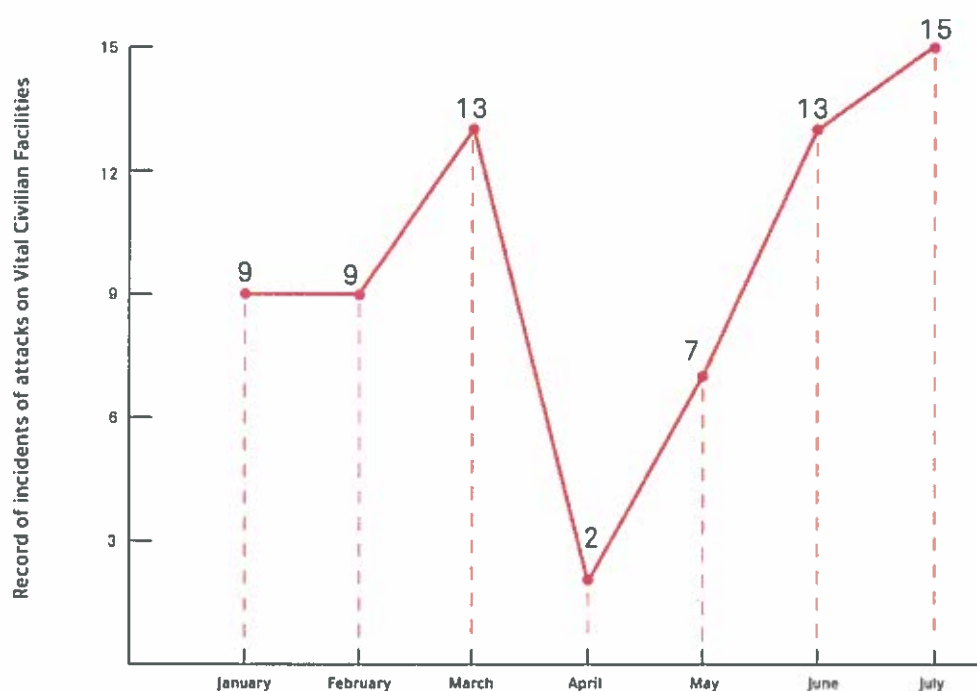
B. Other parties:

- **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** One.

The record of attacks documented in July 2021 on vital civilian facilities was distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Attacked Facility \ Perpetrator Party	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties
Places of Worship				Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified
Mosques	1			
Vital Educational Facilities				
Schools	3			
Educational Institutions	1			
Infrastructure				
Power stations and energy facilities				1
Civil Defense Centers		3	4	
Water facilities and related resources		1		
Official Headquarters			1	
Total	5	4	5	1

Thus, the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented since the start of 2021 up to August of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria has now reached 68 in total, distributed monthly as follows:



The chart shows that July saw the highest figures in terms of attacks on vital civilian facilities since the beginning of 2021, due to the continued policy of escalation of bombardment for the second consecutive month by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces, which targeted civilian areas far from the lines of contact with factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, especially in the Jabal al Zaweya area in Idlib and its vicinity, despite the advent of the ceasefire agreement that entered into force on March 6, 2020.

The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in July:

On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 14:45 local time, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with some of the shells landing on the [Tishreen School](#) in al Gharbi neighborhood in the city, [injuring](#) four [civilians](#), in addition to partially destroying a roof of one of the school's rooms, as well as causing moderate material damage to the school's furniture. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 10:00 local time, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles targeting [al Rouj al Shamali Water Station](#), located at the junction of al Namra village, near al Sheikh Yousef village in Sahl al Rouj in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, where the electronic equipment building of the Civil Defense Center - Sahl al Rouj 425 - is located. The bombing caused [partial destruction](#) to the [main building](#) of the station, as well as moderate material damage to its equipment, and [partial destruction](#) to the [building where](#) the Civil Defense is based, in addition to causing significant material damage to a firefighting vehicle and a rescue vehicle belonging to the Civil Defense, with the bombing also in-

injuring five Civil Defense personnel. The Syrian Network for Human Rights notes that the station, which has stopped working due to the lack of electricity, contains 10 pumps that are supposed to irrigate 3,500 hectares of agricultural land. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

The Civil Defense Organization published a [statement](#) on the incident on its official website.



On Wednesday, July 21, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at al Bara village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with one of the shells hitting the Ismail Latah Elementary School, which is located in the same compound as a teacher training institute, partially destroying the school building and causing moderate material damage to its furniture. Al Bara village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, July 22, 2021, unidentified gunmen blew up a gas pipeline in Talet al Hjeif in Badiya (desert area) of Ayyash village in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, using IEDs, causing significant material damage to the gas pipeline, putting it out of service. We note that the gas pipeline in question runs from the al Jabsa gas plant in al Shaddadi city, south of Hasaka governorate, to the Baniyas Refinery in Tartus governorate. Ayyash village was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, July 25, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces used a missile launcher to fire six missiles at [Afrin](#) city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [one of which hit the Civil Defense Center](#) in the city, [partially destroying the center's structure](#) and [causing moderate material damage](#) to three of the [vehicles belonging](#) to the Civil Defense organization (one ambulance and two service cars). Afrin city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

The Civil Defense Organization published [a news report](#) about the incident on its Twitter official account.

D. Record of indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights was unable to document any indiscriminate attacks or attacks using outlawed weapons in July

IV. Attachments:

(1) Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 129 Civilians, Including 44 Children, 17 Women, and 10 Victims Due to Torture, in Syria in July 2021

(2) 172 Arbitrary Arrests/ Detentions Documented in Syria in July 2021, Including One Woman

V. Conclusions and Recommendations:**Conclusions:**

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime or Russian forces prior to any attack under the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks lead to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.

- The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.
- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, caused massive collateral damage that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations:

UN Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that “all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using the veto, as it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states’ veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians’ lives and to save the Syrian people’s heritage and historical artifacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions and landmines in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other permanent member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced person camps, and to follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan have proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.
- Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.

The United Nations Special Envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.

- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.

The Coalition (US-led coalition and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army

- The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian Organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.
- Provide protected facilities and vehicles, such as medical facilities, schools, and ambulances, with distinctive signs that can be distinguished from long distances.

Acknowledgments

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



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