

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1777
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Syrian Network for Human Rights
Titel:	Seventh Annual SNHR Report on Russian Forces' Violations since the Beginning of Russia's Military Intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015
Udgivet:	30. september 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. december 2022



Seventh Annual SNHR Report on Russian Forces' Violations since the Beginning of Russia's Military Intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015

**The Death of 6,943 Civilians, Including 2,044 Children
and 1,243 attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities
at the Hands of the Russian Forces**

Friday 30 September 2022

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

Content:

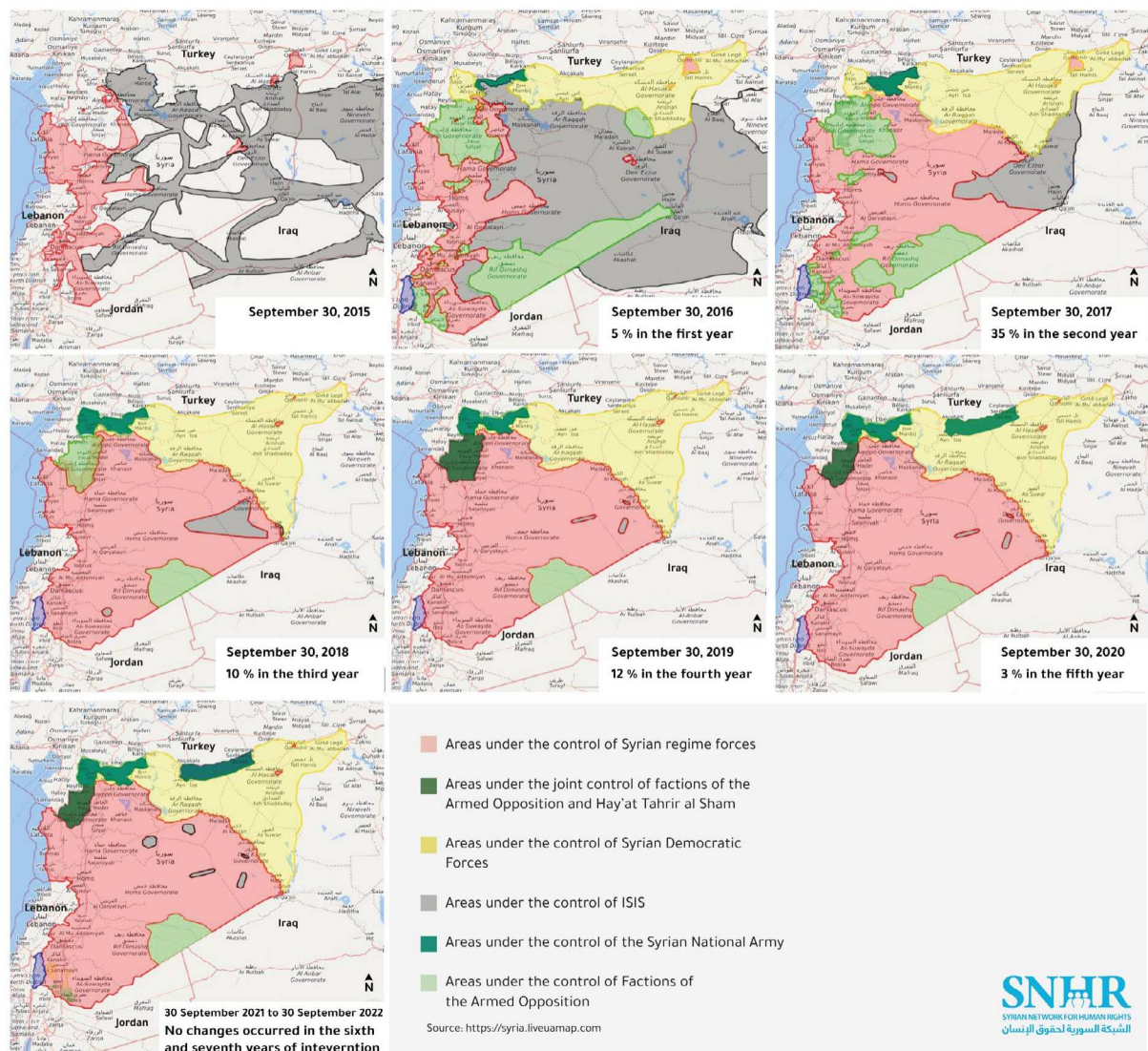
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I. Brief Background

Since the early days of the people's uprising for freedom, Russia has opposed the people's wishes for democratic change in Syria, using various, and sometimes contradictory, justifications; these pretexts include claiming that the people's movement is supported by the West, while any change must be carried out from within the Syrian regime itself. Russia knows that it is impossible for the Syrian regime to undertake any serious changes, and that popular mobilization is the only means to achieve a political transition under such an exceptionally repressive and tyrannical regime, which has eliminated Syria's political and civil life.

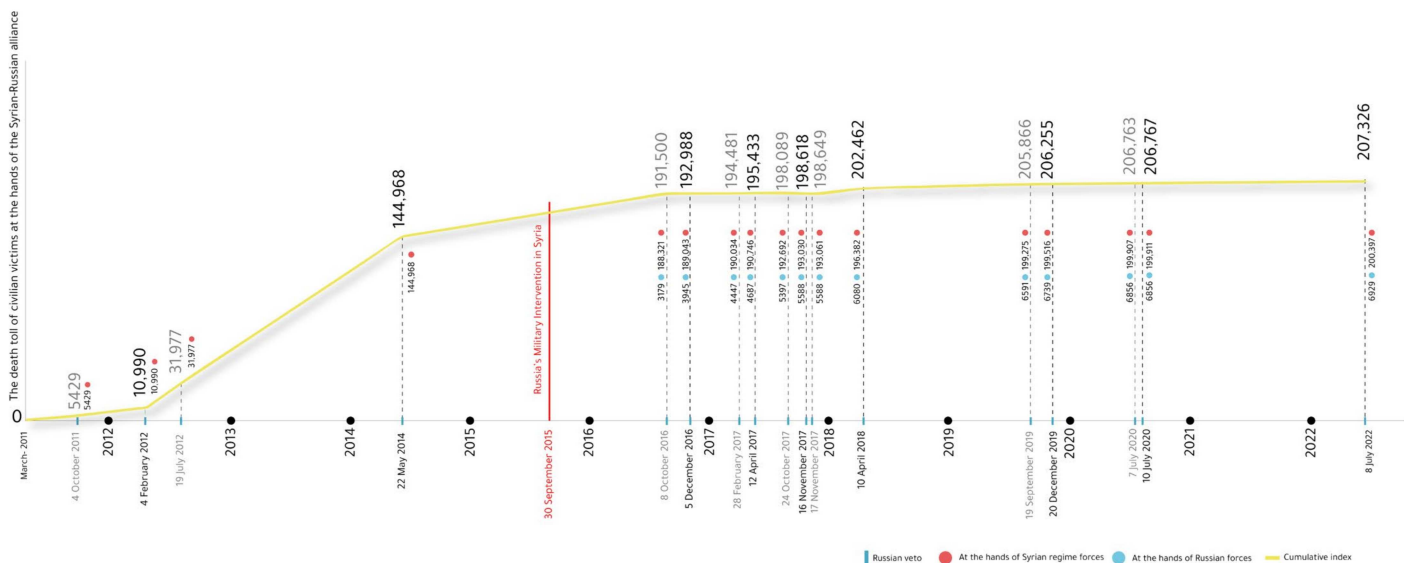
For years, Russia has provided the Syrian regime with all kinds of logistical, political, economic and military support. On September 30, 2015, Russia [declared](#) its direct military intervention and began bombarding Syrian territories. There is no doubt that Russia has played a decisive role in consolidating the Syrian regime and impeding any political progress towards democracy, which enabled the regime to simply disregard negotiations, especially after recapturing large areas of the Syrian territories over which it had previously lost its control, thanks to Russia's military might.

A map showing the change in areas of control to the regime's benefit since the beginning of the military Russian intervention since 2015 until now



Russia has abused its UN veto against the interests of the Syrian people, protect the Syrian regime and thwart the political transition process 17 times, four of these before its direct military intervention in Syria, and 13 since. Russia also voted in all the UN Human Rights Council sessions during which it was present, i.e., 21 times, against all the council's resolutions condemning the Syrian regime's violence and brutality, even mobilizing its allies, including Algeria, Venezuela, Cuba and other dictatorial countries to vote in favor of the Syrian regime.

Russia's use of its veto in the UN Security Council in favor of the Syrian regime, and the death toll of civilian casualties killed by the Syrian-Russian alliance following every Russian veto from March 2011 to July 8, 2022:



Apart from its military backing, Russian support for the Syrian regime also extends to various other fields, including obstruction, such as justifying the regime's use of chemical weapons, questioning the veracity of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reports, exploiting cross-border humanitarian aid ([we have issued three extensive reports on this issue](#)), and employing media outlets to promote propaganda in support of the Syrian regime, and to improve its image.

As we've done every year on this date, the Syrian Network for Human Rights is issuing its annual report to mark the occasion, in which we provide the latest updated toll of human and material losses caused by the Russian military intervention in Syria, due to Russia's forces committing a massive number of violations International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law. In this report, we also highlight the absolute illegality of Russia's military intervention in Syria and we call on Russia to compensate the victims and their families, start restoring the massive material damage inflicted by their forces, end their support for the Syrian regime which has proven to be of unparalleled brutality, and work to support the process of political transition to democracy in Syria.

As Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, says:

Following Russia's wholly illegitimate military intervention in Syria, and the horrific atrocities it has perpetrated, including the bombardment of hospitals and residential neighborhoods, and its savage killing of hundreds of civilians, the West failed to impose any sanctions against the Russian Federation over any of these heinous violations, some of which amount to crimes against humanity. We believe that the sense of absolute impunity Russia has for the crimes it perpetrated in Syria encouraged it to move forward with the same policy elsewhere and repeat its violations of international law in Ukraine. Russia must be held accountable for what it has done against the Syrian people and state.

II. Methodology of the Report

SNHR's team conducts constant monitoring of incidents taking place and reported events across Syria through a network of field observers who work with us, who have, over the years, built an extensive network of relations with dozens of various sources. Our methodology in assigning responsibility for certain attacks to the Russian forces relies on cross-checking information from a large number of sources, including statements issued by Russian officials, and on the large number of first-hand accounts we receive, especially those from the central radar workers who monitor the movements of warplanes deployed from Syrian and Russian airbases and determine the course of these flights. Given their years of experience, these observers can, in many cases, specify even the models of warplanes and their individual tail codes. They can also monitor some of the instructions issued by the regime and Russian personnel stationed at military bases across Syria. In many cases, we've also relied in attributing responsibility on Russian forces' reports about certain attacks and on the difference in the destructive power of the Russian raids, in comparison with those carried out by the Syrian government. Additionally, the Russian air force, unlike the Syrian regime's air force, has the ability to carry out night flights and carry out bombing raids at night, as well as having greater access to high-precision heavy artillery weapons.

Over the past year, Russian forces have launched more ground attacks, which were previously mostly carried out by Syrian regime forces, with the Russian forces making far heavier use of heavy artillery weapons in their bombardment than they did in previous years when they relied more on aerial bombardment. Such shelling is different in nature from aerial attacks; while we can often identify Russian warplanes from the shape of the plane, type of munitions used and other factors, it is more complicated in the case of ground-based shelling to identify whether the Syrian regime or Russian forces are responsible for a particular instance of shelling. However, the responsibility for any of these attacks is shared between Russian forces and the Syrian regime forces, since they are fighting collectively, so they bear joint responsibility. Additionally, most of the weapons used by the Syrian regime are Russian-made, and it is the regime who brought Russia to Syria.

This report offers three first-hand accounts that we collected through direct conversations with witnesses, none of which are cited from open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews to the witnesses beforehand and obtained their consent to use the information they have provided in this report, without offering or giving them any incentives from our side in return. We also tried to spare the witnesses the suffering of recalling the traumatic event and provided assurances to those wishing to use a pseudonym that we will not disclose their identity, in order to protect witnesses' confidentiality and shield them from any harassment or persecution by security forces. These measures are adopted in accordance with SNHR's internal protocols which we continuously strive to improve as we build more experience, to ensure the highest possible level of care and reliability.

The investigations included in this report prove conclusively that the targeted locations were civilian areas with no military bases or armories belonging to the armed opposition/ the Syrian National Army or Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) present in these areas before or during these attacks. Also, the Russian forces did not issue any warning to civilian populations prior to any of these attacks, as required under International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

As part of our investigation into these incidents, SNHR has also analyzed a large quantity of related video footage and photos posted online or sent to us by local activists via e-mail, Skype or other social media platforms. Some of the videos shared by activists showed the sites of the attacks, as well as showing casualties, dead bodies and large amounts of destruction caused by these attacks.

We retain copies of all videos and photos included in this report in a confidential electronic database, in addition to keeping backup copies on hard discs. However, we do not claim that we have documented all cases, given regime forces and other groups blanket ban on any media coverage of their operations, and persecution of activists and some other armed groups. For more details of the methodology adopted by SNHR, you can check this [link](#).

Russia has, predictably, consistently denied carrying out any attacks against civilians, with the Russian Foreign Minister repeatedly insisting that Russia's intervention in Syria is legitimate, since it is taking place at the request of the Syrian regime and, supposedly, to fight ISIS, with the Russian official further asserting that Russia is committed to the rules of IHL. Such transparent untruths are, however, quickly exposed; Russia has not launched a single investigation into even one of its crimes in Syria, despite numerous UN, international and local reports, and reports by [the New York Times](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), and SNHR, all of which documented many incidents in which Russian forces were involved in violations amounting to war crimes.

Since the beginning of the Russian military intervention, SNHR has worked on monitoring and documenting violations perpetrated by the Russian forces, including killing, destruction and forced displacement. We have published a large number of reports on those violations. Since September 2015 up till now, we have published 94 reports, highlighting several patterns of violations perpetrated by the Russian forces in Syria, which can be viewed [here](#).

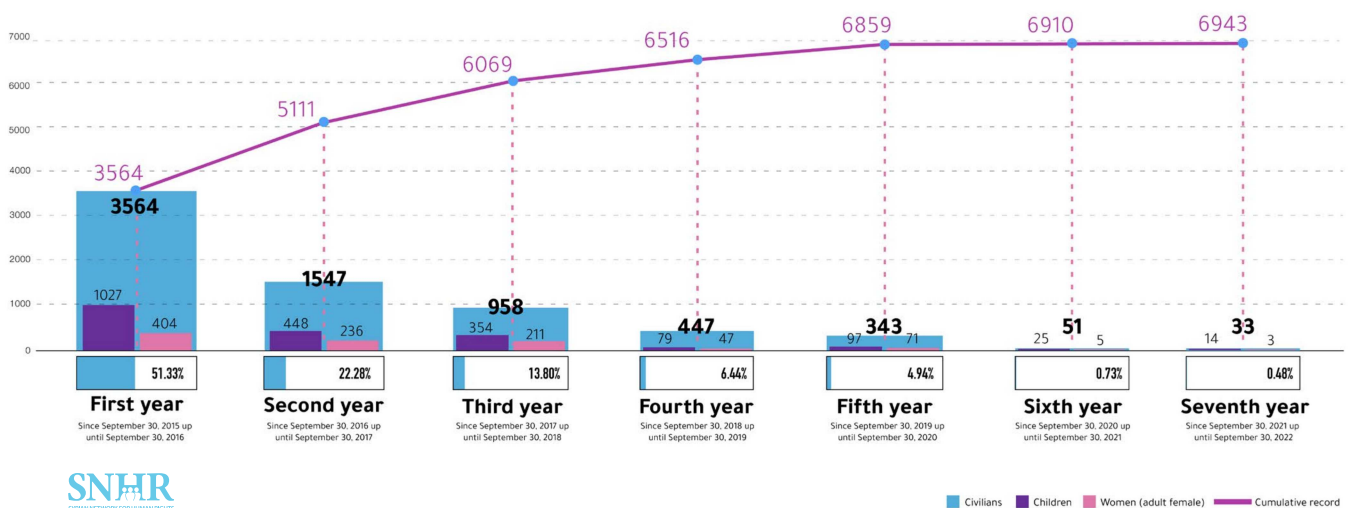
The information contained in this report represents only the bare minimum of the details of the incidents which we managed to document, given the severity and magnitude of the violations committed. The social, economic and psychological ramifications of those events are not covered in this report.

III. Analysis of the Most Prominent Violations Perpetrated by Russian Forces From the Beginning of Russia's Military Intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015 to September 30, 2022, According to SNHR's Database

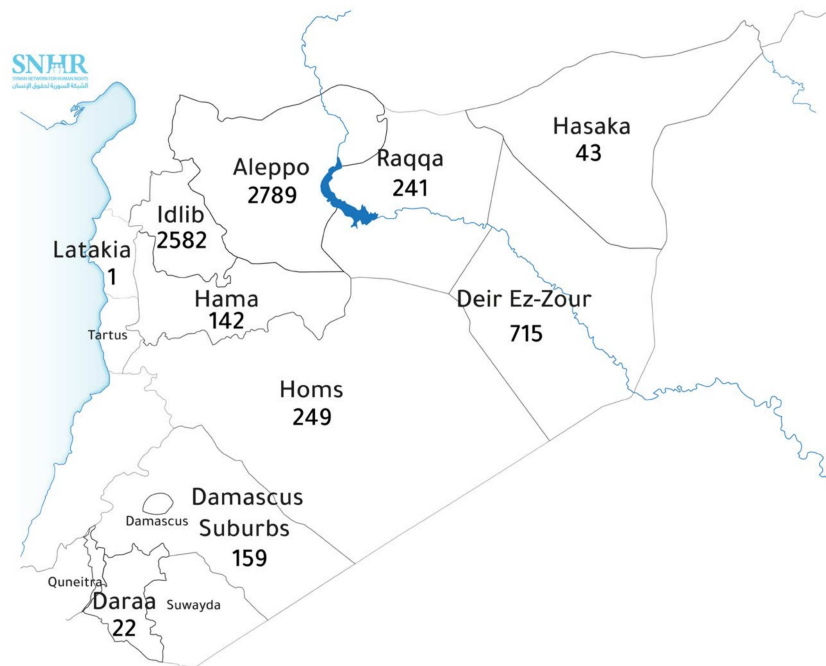
A. Civilian Death Toll:

SNHR has documented the death of 6,943 civilians, including 2,044 children and 977 women (adult females) at the hands of Russian forces since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until 30 September 2022.

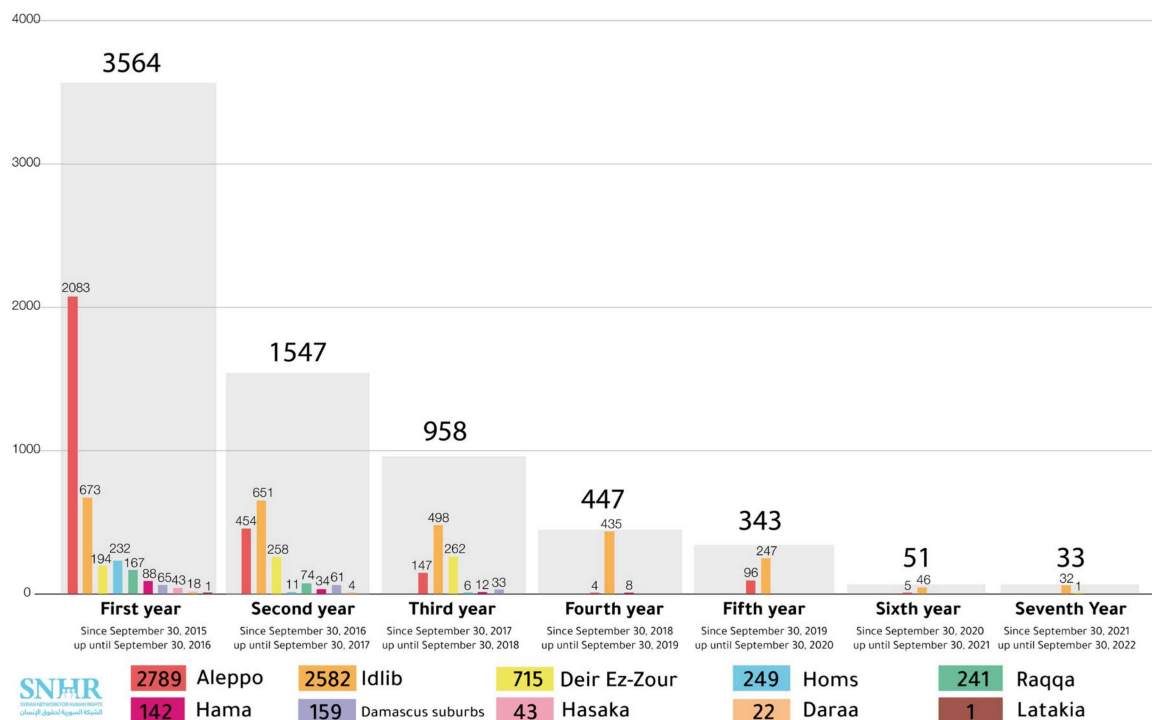
The death toll of civilian victims killed by the Russian forces is distributed by year as follows:



The death toll of civilian victims killed by Russian forces is distributed by governorate as follows:



The death toll of civilian victims killed by Russian forces is distributed by year across Syria's governorates as follows:



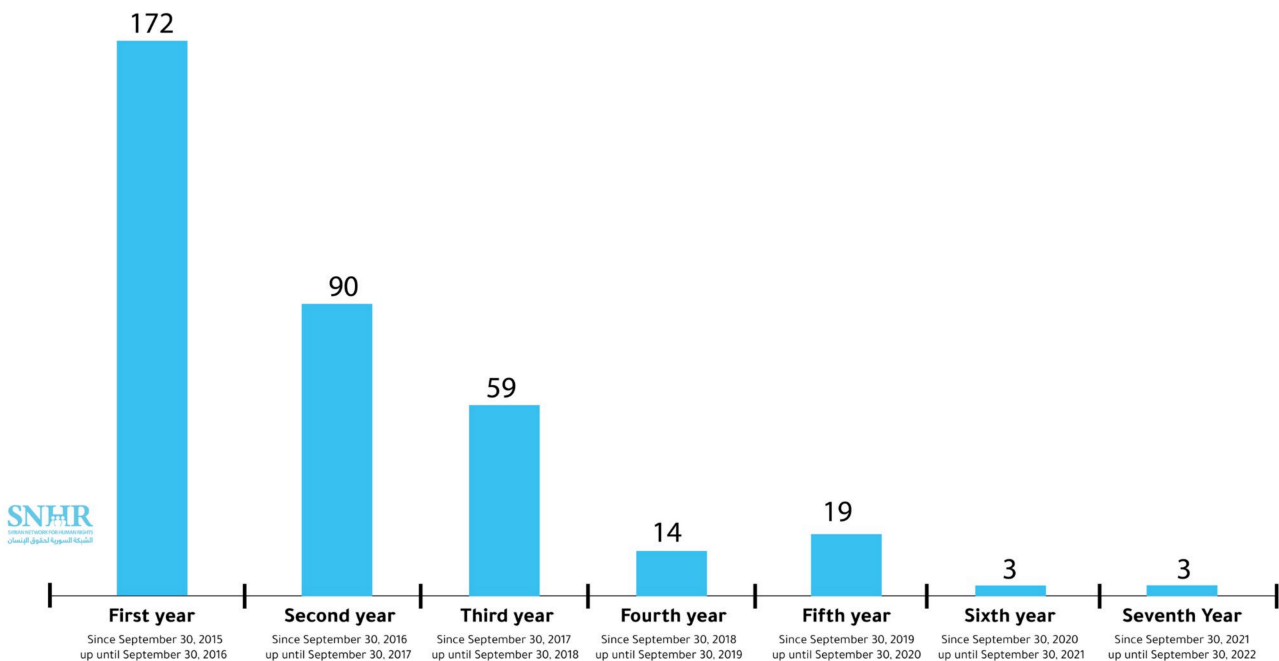
The graph above shows that the first year of the Russian intervention saw its highest death toll to date, accounting for around 52% of the total number of deaths, followed by the second year of intervention with around 23%.

In terms of geographic distribution, Aleppo Governorate experienced the highest death toll, followed by Idlib. Statistics indicate that around 79% of the total death toll from Russia's intervention occurred in these two governorates - about 41% in Aleppo and 38% in Idlib.

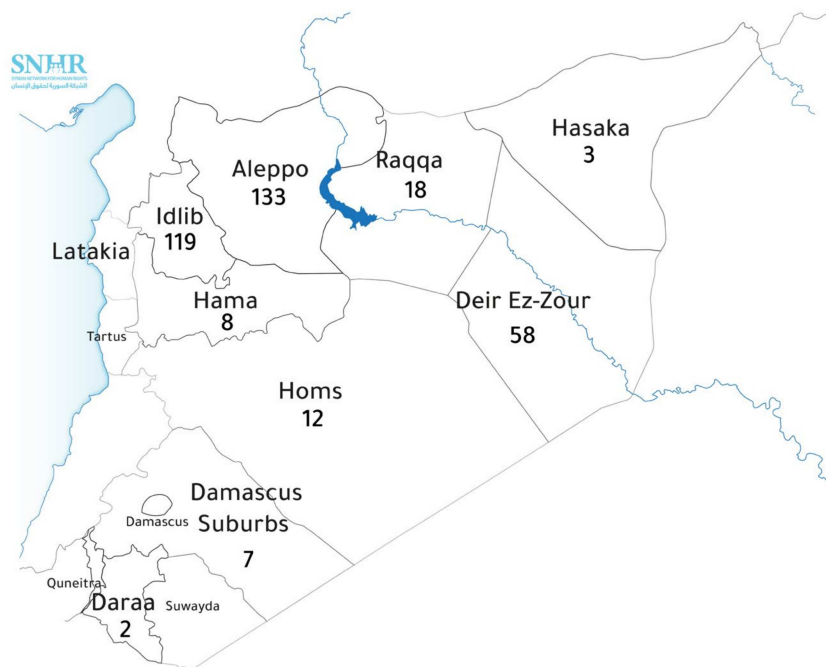
B. Record of Massacres:

SNHR has documented no fewer than 360 massacres committed by the Russian forces since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until 30 September 2022.

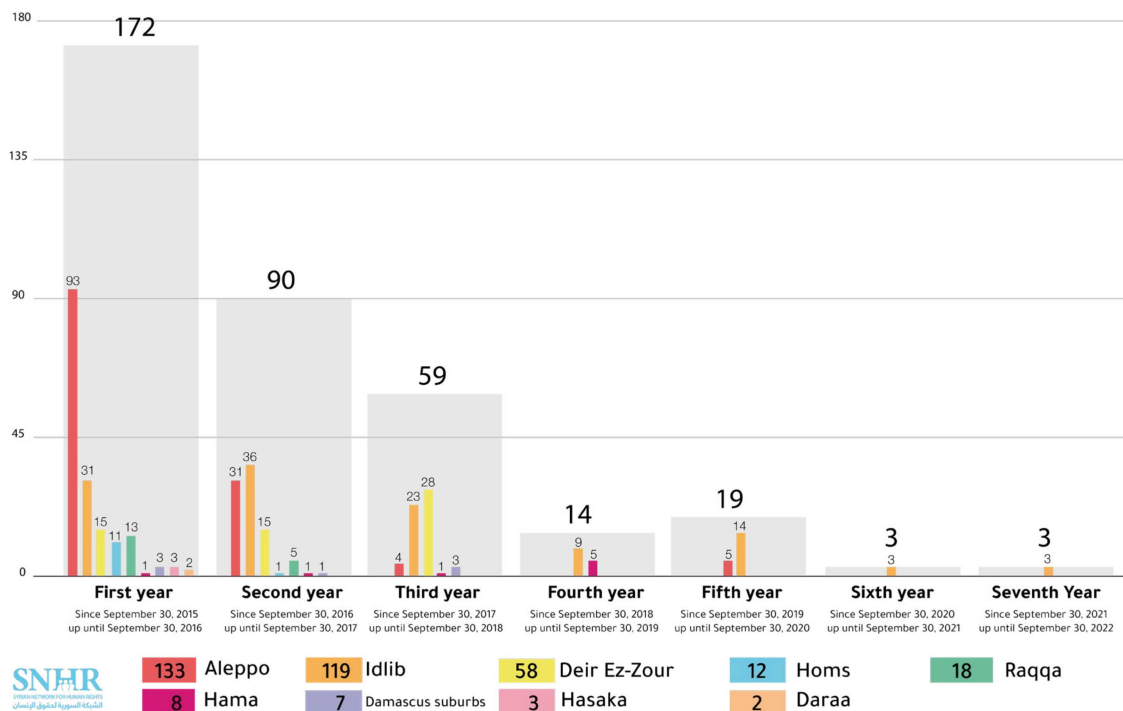
The record of massacres committed by Russian forces is distributed by year as follows:



The record of massacres committed by Russian forces is distributed by governorate as follows:



The record of massacres committed by Russian forces is distributed by year across governorates as follows:

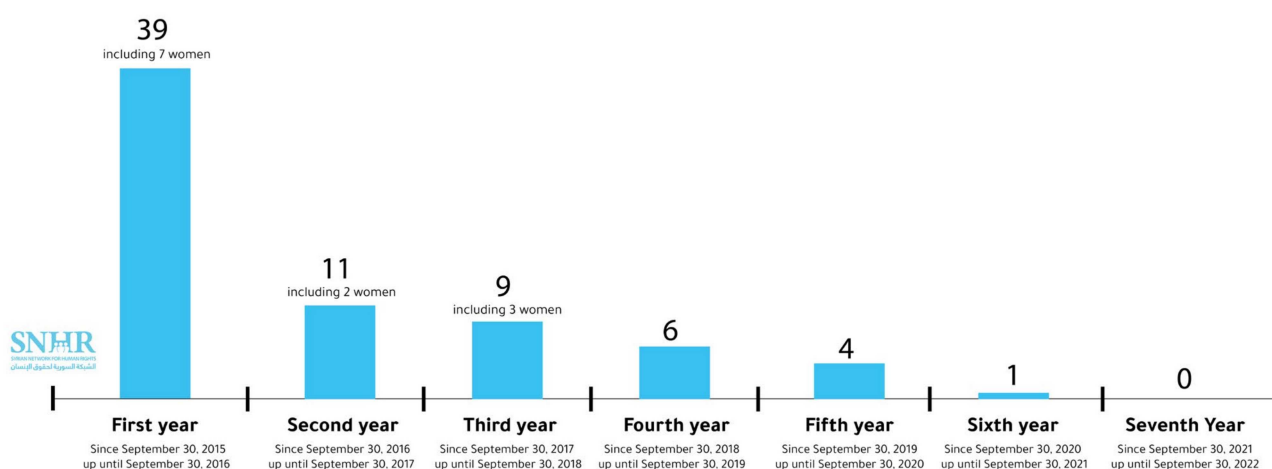


The statistics on the massacres committed by Russian forces in Syria show that the first year of Russia's intervention saw the highest number of massacres, 172 massacres in all, accounting for around 48% of the total number. The annual number of massacres decreased gradually over the following six years, with the past two years accounting for only 1% of the total. In terms of geographic distribution, the largest number of massacres was committed in Aleppo, then Idlib then Deir Ez-Zour.

C. The Death Toll of Medical Personnel:

SNHR has documented the death of 70 medical personnel, including 12 women (adult females), killed by the Russian forces since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up to 30 September 2022.

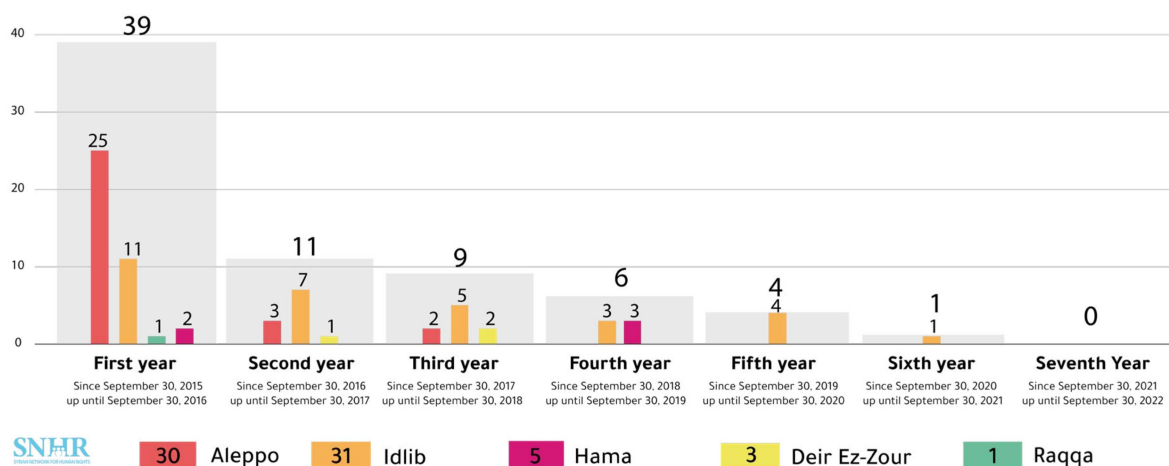
The death toll of medical personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by year as follows:



The death toll of medical personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by governorate as follows:



The death toll of medical personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by year across governorates as follows:

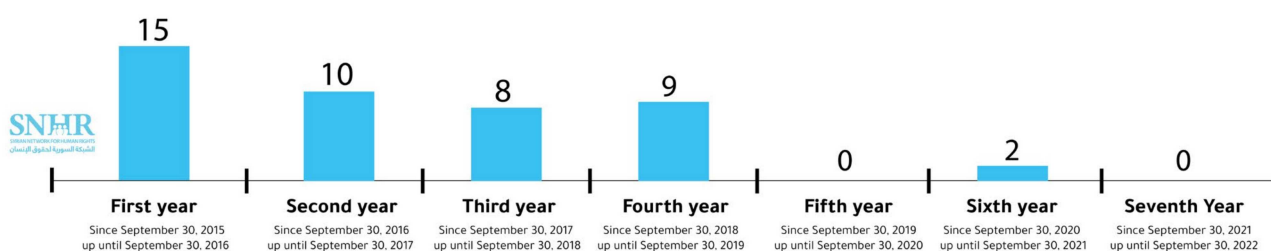


The above graph starkly underlines the role played by Russian forces in the deterioration of the medical situation in Syria through terrorizing and killing medical personnel and driving hundreds to displacement fleeing carnage and death. The highest annual death toll among medical personnel was recorded in the first year of the Russian military intervention, with 39 victims, most of whom were in Aleppo (25 victims), followed by Idlib (11 victims).

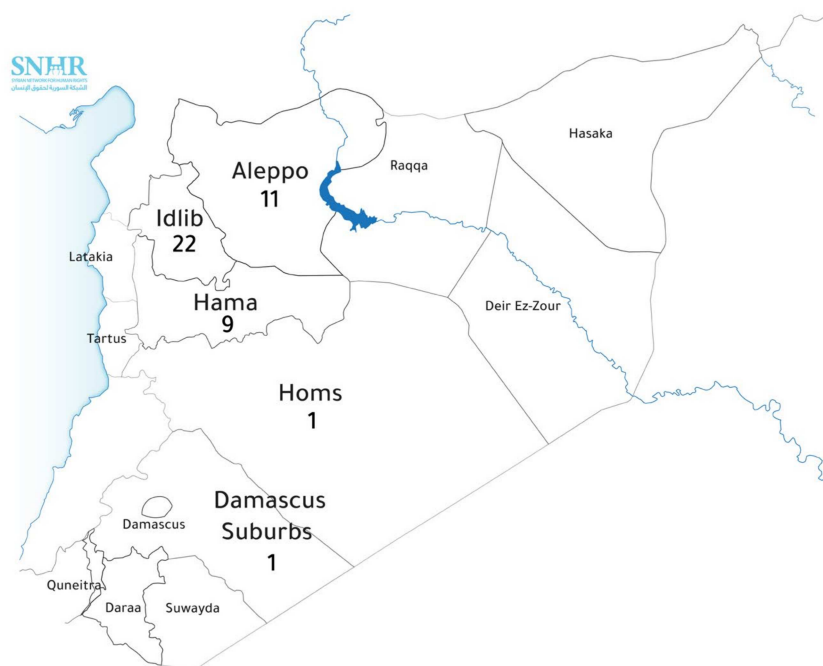
D. The Death Toll of Civil Defense personnel (White Helmets):

SNHR has documented the death of 44 civil defense personnel killed by Russian forces from the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria to 30 September 2022.

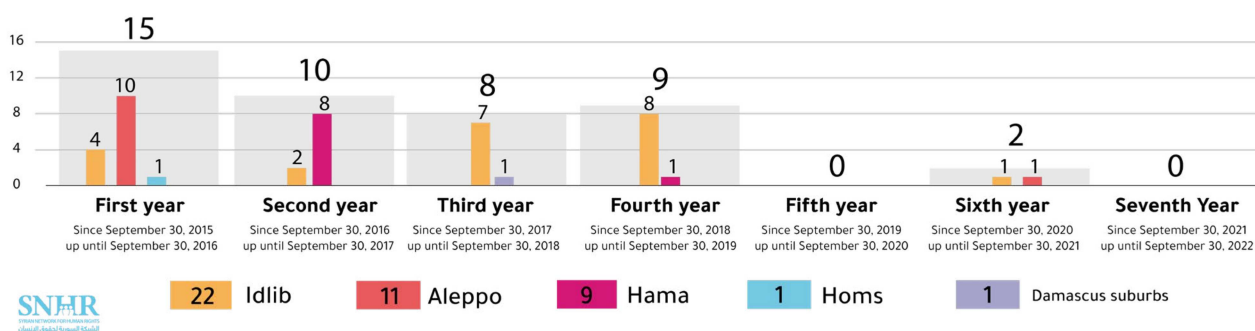
The death toll of Civil Defense personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by year as follows:



The death toll of Civil Defense personnel victims killed by Russian forces is distributed by governorate as follows:



The death toll of Civil Defense personnel victims killed by Russian forces is distributed by year across governorates as follows:

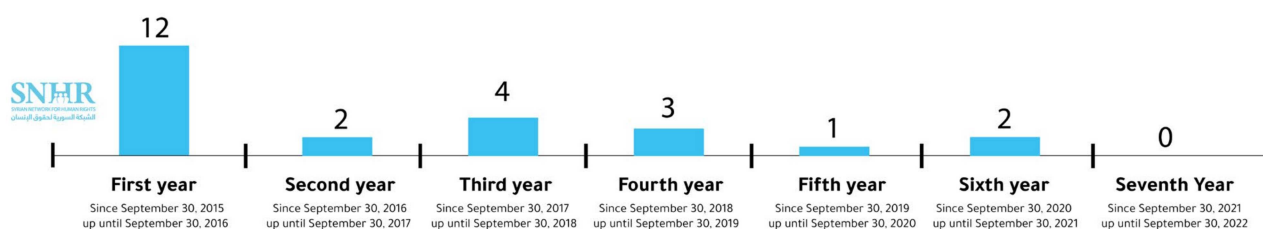


Russian forces have targeted the Civil Defense Organization through bombarding their centers or by the employment of double-tap airstrikes, which increased the number of casualties, especially among civil defense personnel and paramedics. This is demonstrated by the graph above. These statistics show that the first year of Russia's intervention witnessed the highest number of casualties (15 victims), around 35% of the total, followed by the second year (10 victims), around 23% of the total. The highest number of civil defense casualties were in Idlib with 50% of the total, specifically in the third and fourth years of intervention, then comes Aleppo with 25% of the total, most of which occurred in the first year of Russia's military intervention.

E. The Death Toll of Media Personnel:

SNHR has documented the death of 24 media personnel killed by the Russian forces from the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria to 30 September 2022.

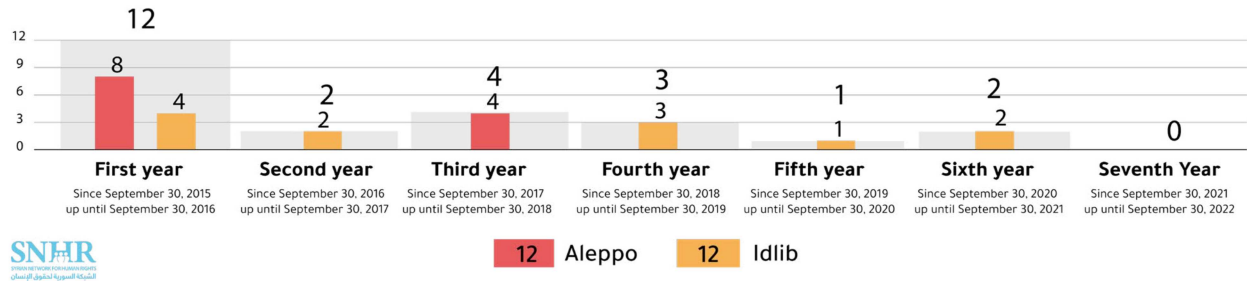
The death toll of media personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by year as follows:



The death toll of media personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by governorate as follows:



The death toll of media personnel killed by Russian forces is distributed by year across governorates as follows:

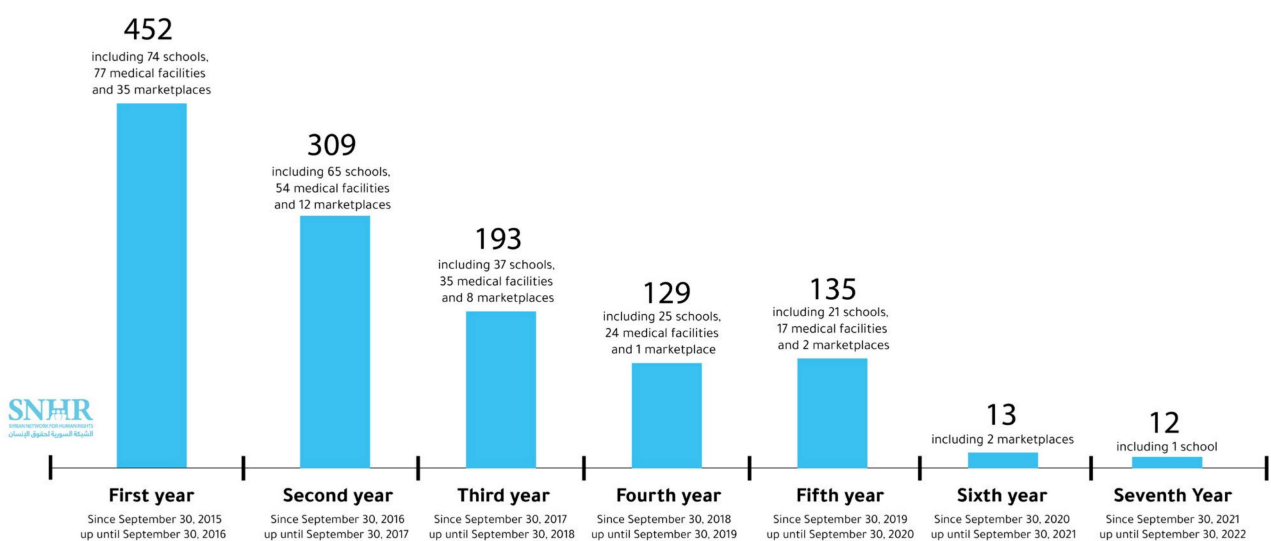


The graph above clearly shows the deliberate targeting of media personnel in Aleppo and Idlib by the Russian forces, with the total number of casualties being equally distributed between the two governorates. The first year of Russia's intervention witnessed half the total death toll among media personnel due to Russia's intervention, with 12 casualties, accounting for 50% of the total, followed by the third year which saw 4 casualties, 17% of the total death toll.

F. Record of Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities:

SNHR has documented no fewer than 1,243 attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until 30 September 2022, including 223 schools, 207 medical facility and 60 marketplaces.

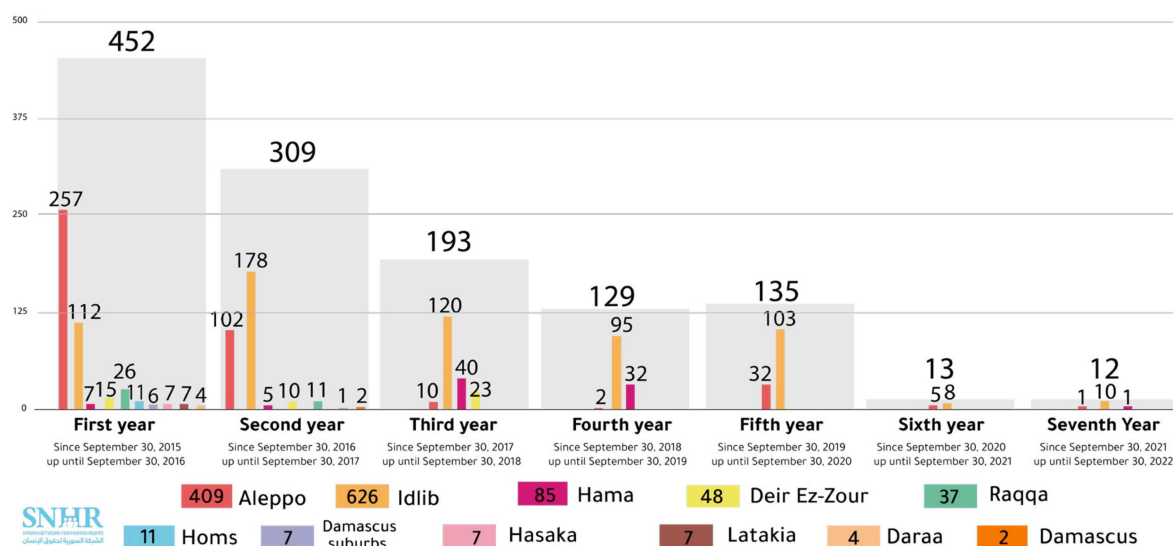
The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities conducted by Russian forces is distributed by year as follows:



The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces is distributed by governorate as follows:



The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces is distributed by year across governorates as follows:

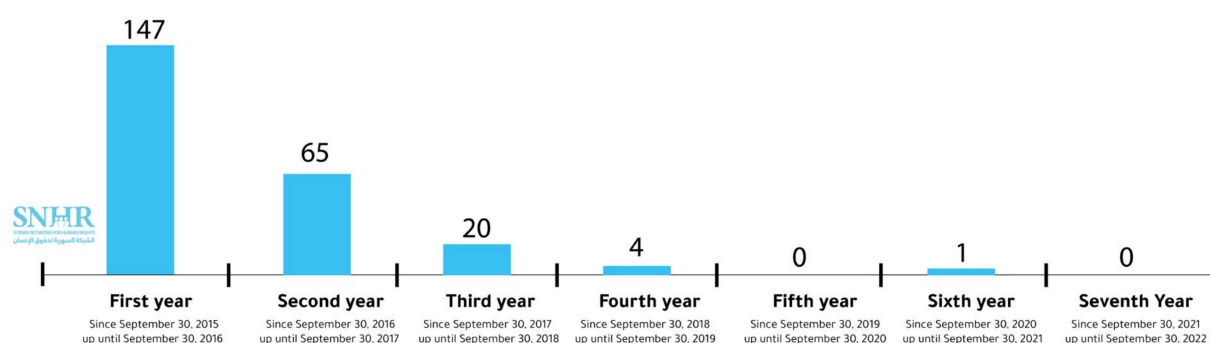


The graph above reflects the massive scale of the destruction inflicted by Russian forces as a result of Russia's military intervention in Syria, especially in its first two years. The first year saw 452 attacks on vital civilian facilities, around 37% of the total documented number of attacks, with 237 of these in Aleppo and 112 of them in Idlib. Meanwhile, the second year saw 309 attacks, around 25% of the total attacks, 178 of which were in Idlib and 102 in Aleppo. Idlib has suffered the largest number of attacks on vital civilian facilities enduring as many as 626 attacks, i.e., 51% of the total number of attacks documented.

G. Record of the Use of Cluster Munition:

SNHR has documented at least 237 attacks using cluster munitions by Russian forces since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Syria until 30 September 2022.

The record of attacks by Russian forces using cluster munitions is distributed by year as follows:

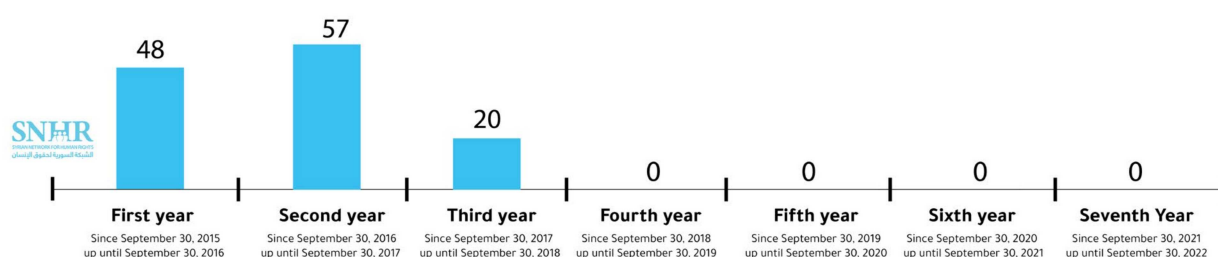


The above record reflects the intensity of the military operations carried out by the Russian forces in the first years of their intervention, which accounted for about 62% of the total number of attacks with cluster munition documented by SNHR. The number fell in the second year, which accounted for around 28% of the total number of attacks.

H. Record of the Use of Incendiary Munition:

SNHR has documented at least 125 attacks using incendiary munitions carried out by Russian forces since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Syria until 30 September 2022.

The record of attacks by Russian forces using incendiary munitions is distributed by year as follows:



According to what we have been able to document on the use of incendiary munitions in Syria, this use was limited to the first three years of the Russian military intervention, with the largest number of these attacks taking place in the second year, accounting for around 46% of the total use of incendiary munition attacks, followed by the first year, which accounted for around 39% of the total, based on the results shown above.

I. Forced Displacement:

The escalating violence perpetrated by Russian forces had the greatest impact in terms of forced displacement movement. Russian attacks, in parallel with the attacks launched by the Syrian Iranian alliance contributed to the displacement of approximately 4.8 million people, most of whom are civilians who have been displaced several times.

IV. Details Summarizing Some of the Incidents Added to the SNHR's Database During the Past Year

a. The Most Prominent Incidents of Extrajudicial Killing by Russian Forces in the Seventh Year of Russia's Military Intervention:

On Thursday, 11 November 2021, at around 10:05 local time, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles to bomb an agricultural area to the north of Idlib, between Maarat Misreen city and Idlib city. The missiles hit a [poultry barn](#) and a nearby house inhabited by IDPs from the southern countryside of Aleppo. The bombardment [killed 5 civilians from one family, including 3 children and 1 woman, in addition to inflicting massive damage on the poultry barn and the house](#). The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



Destruction resulting from a Russian air strike on a poultry barn north of Idlib city, which inflicted a massacre. Date: 11 November 2021. Photo by: Ahmad Rahhal

on Monday, 22 November 2021 a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles to bomb an agricultural road at the outskirts of Taltita village in al-Simaq Mountain area west of Idlib governorate, killing two civilians, Ayman al-Qodah and Ibrahim Ibrahim. Taltita was under joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, 9 December 2021, a 17-year-old boy called [Abdul Aziz Khalil al-Hajar](#), from Sbeikhan village in the countryside of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was killed by a bullet shot by one of the members of a Russian patrol who opened fire indiscriminately in the main street in al-Joura Neighborhood in Deir Ez-Zour city without any apparent reason. The neighborhood was under the control of the regime forces at the time of the incident.

On January 1, 2022, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles in bombing a house and tents belonging to IDPs working in herding sheep in the eastern outskirts of the White River area, which is within the area of Jisr al-Shoghour city in the western countryside of Idlib governorate. Three civilians - two children and a woman - were killed, while in addition to the [material damages](#) to the house and the tents, as well as [the death of a number of sheep](#). The area was under joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS when the incident took place.



Material damages to an IDP tent due to a Russian airstrike east of the White River area - Idlib/ 1 January 2022. Photo by: Saad Eddin Zeidan

On the dawn of Friday 22 July 2022, a Su-34 fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, conducted 4 airstrikes (2 double-tap airstrikes) on two locations at the outskirts of al-Jadeeda village, which was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident took place. The attack killed 7 civilians, including 4 child siblings (3 girls and 1 boy). The following is an overview of what we managed to document about the Russian airstrikes on those two locations:

The first location:

At around 5:50, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, conducted an airstrike with a missile that hit the eastern side of an IDP shelter - formerly used as a building for breeding livestock. The families of three siblings from the Mazan family were living there after they were displaced from Zeizoun village in the western countryside of Hama. The location is around 350 meters north of al-Jaddeda village. Ten minutes later, after civilians had gathered to transport the wounded to hospitals and extract those who were trapped under the debris of the building, the same warplane conducted another airstrike with two missiles that fell approximately 25 meters away from the first one ([one of them hit the road leading to the shelter](#)). The attack killed 6 civilians, including 4 children, and [destroyed the shelter](#). This attack amounts to a massacre of civilians.

The second location:

Fifteen minutes after the Russian airstrike on the first location, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, conducted two consecutive airstrikes with an interval of 10 minutes, between them, using two missiles, against two adjacent houses south of al-Jaddeda village (around 550 meters away from the village as the crow flies) located at the side of al-Jaddeda - al-Janoodiyah road. The airstrike killed one civilian who was driving his motorbike along the main road, and [largely destroyed the two houses](#).



The dead bodies of the four siblings (children) killed by a Russian airstrike on an IDP shelter north to al-Jaddeda village, inside an ambulance/ Idlib on 22 July 2022

SNHR has issued a detailed [report](#) on the attack

SNHR spoke with Jihad Mazan¹, an uncle of the children's victims, and one of the survivors of the attack, originally from al-Zayadia Village in the western countryside of Idlib. He had been living with his family in Zeizoun Village in the western countryside of Hama before being displaced to al-Jaddeda Village about six years ago. The family lived in an abandoned barn after restoring it² (people of the area identify it as a poultry barn) on the southern outskirts of al-Jaddeda Village. He told us: **"My brother Ayham and I shared the building. He lived with his family in the eastern part of it and I took the western part. later my third brother Refaat built two rooms with an insulated roof on the roof of this building, and he lived there with his family. on July 22, while we were sleeping, our 'house' was bombarded with a missile. Due to the intense impact, I felt a violent shaking and found my feet under the rocks. However, I immediately got up and took out my two daughters who were next to me, then I pulled my two sons from under the ceiling of their room and took them to the hospital. My brother Ayham, who was thrown out of his bed by the first airstrike, was looking for his children who were trapped under the roof of the building. The missile landed in front of the entrance to his house, and the destruction to it was massive. Before we could manage to pull the children out, the warplanes returned and launched a raid with two missiles in a location very close to the first one. One of the missiles made a big hole in the road in front of our house and the second missile fell about three meters away from the first missile. Two young men who were at the site working to rescue the wounded were martyred, and my mother was wounded in the second raid."** Jihad added that the Civil Defense personnel began pulling the children out of the rubble after the second raid, but the children were already dead.

We talked with Dureid Haj Hammoud³, a member of the Civil Defense team who headed to the site of the first raid, who told us: **"Upon my arrival at the site, the Civil Defense had finished evacuating the victims and the wounded, and I saw great destruction at the site and a large crater in the road leading to the 'poultry house' which is located to the east of it."**

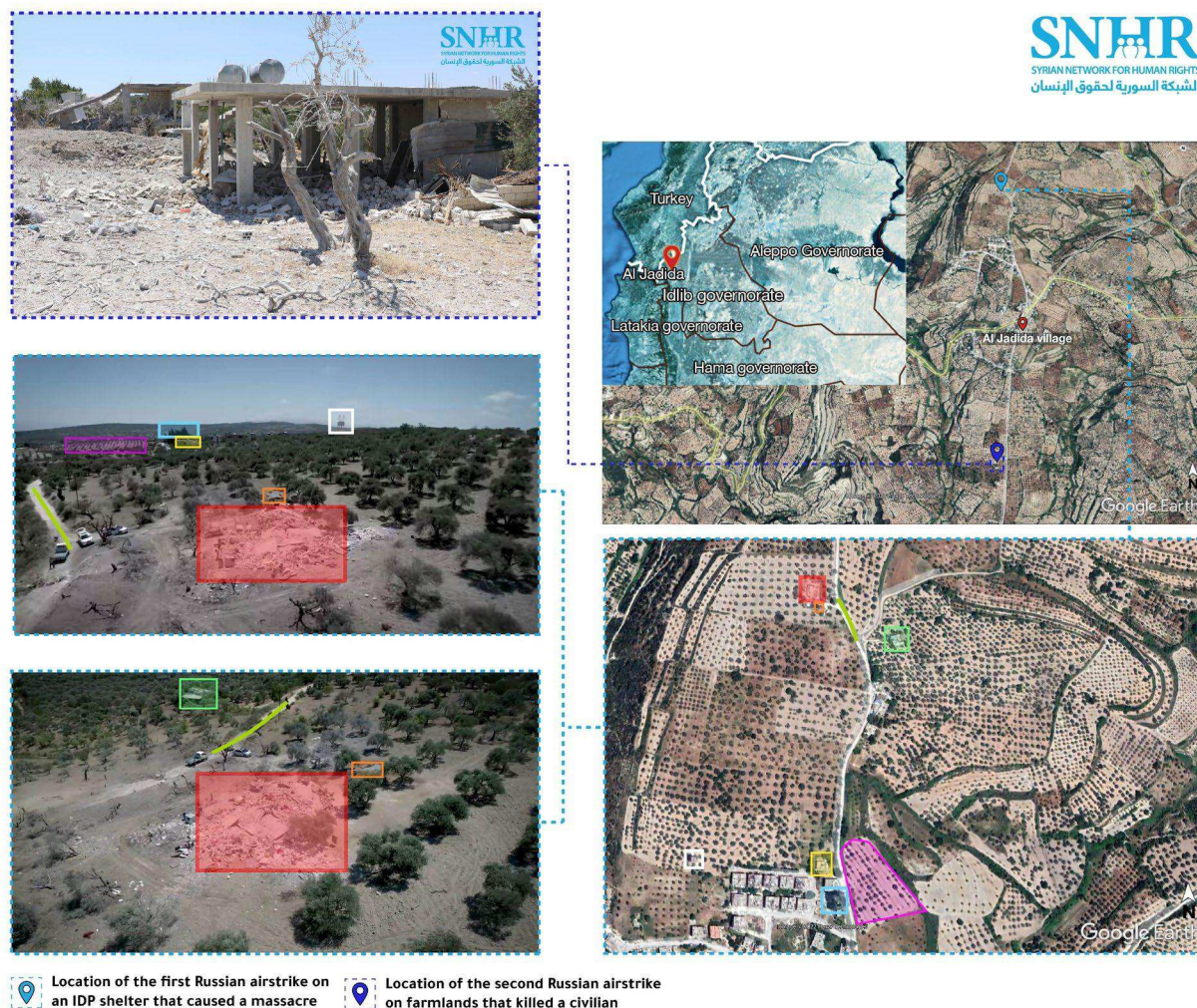
Dureid told us that he then went to al-Qunia Hospital, where he saw the bodies of the four children and a dead adult body placed in a body bag, in addition to six wounded children, with different injuries. **"I went to the site of the second attack, where I saw massive destruction, south of the village of al-Jadeeda, near the al-Jadeeda-al-Janoodyia road. I saw two large craters from the missiles that caused great destruction to the two houses in the targeted site."**

¹ Via WhatsApp on 27 July 2022

² It is about 12x8 meters in dimensions

³ Via WhatsApp on 26 July 2022

Visual analysis displaying the sites of the Russian airstrikes on al-Jaddeda Village in Idlib Governorate on 22 July 2022



On Thursday 8 September 2022, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, conducted three airstrikes with [missiles](#) on a mountainous area south of Hafsarjah Village in the western countryside of Idlib Governorate. The missiles hit a stone quarry sawmill and homes in the surrounding area. [The airstrike killed seven civilians](#), including two children and wounded 11 others, mostly quarry workers, [in addition to causing massive destruction to the quarry building and several houses](#), as well as [severely damaging IDP tents](#) that were around 200 meters away from the quarry, which were damaged due to the shrapnel resulting from the airstrike. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

SNHR spoke with Ahmad al-Ahmad⁴, a media activist from Hafsarjah Village who witnessed the massacre. He told us that on 8 September, at 11:00, the airstrike observatories announced that a Russian warplane had taken off from Hmeimim Airport in Latakia countryside. He recalled: **"The warplane carried out three raids on lands and farms 2 km away from the village; two of them hit a stone quarry sawmill and a nearby house, both of which belong to my cousin. The third raid was more than 200 meters away. After the first raid, I went to the bombing site, and when I arrived, I entered the sawmill and with help from some other young men we pulled out a wounded man and two of the martyrs. Then we retreated a little because the warplane returned, and it bombed the sawmill again. After the bombing ended and the warplane left the skies overhead the civil defense teams worked to retrieve the rest of the martyrs and rescue the wounded."** Ahmed estimated the time between each raid at 10 to 15 minutes and said that two missiles were used in the first raid and three in the second. He added, **"The raids resulted in 7 martyrs, including two children; three from Hafsarja Village and four from other areas of Idlib. Twelve others were wounded, some are in critical condition."**

B. The Most Prominent Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities by the Russian Forces in the Seventh Year of Russia's Intervention:

On Sunday 26 December 2021 a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles to bomb another poultry barn, this time near Hazra Village on the road between Darat Azzah city and Tirmanin village in the western countryside of Aleppo, [killing a number of the birds inside, and partially destroying the poultry barn building](#). The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

On Sunday 2 January 2022, at around 13:25 local time, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles to bomb an area near al-Arshani water plant, established with the support of the GOAL humanitarian organization, which was located on a steep hill north-west of Idlib city, causing [massive destruction to the establishment and its perimeter fence, as well as severely damaging the main pumping pipeline and equipment, cutting the water supply to the plant off](#). One of the plant workers was injured in the bombardment. SNHR notes that al-Arshani water plant is a sub-plant that pumps water to the city of Idlib, with the Russian bombing cutting off the city's water supply temporarily until water was pumped to the city from other plants. The area was under joint control between armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

⁴ Via WhatsApp on 21 September 2022



Destruction caused by a Russian airstrike on al-Arshani water plant north of Idlib city on 2 January 2022, Photo by: Omar al-Bam

On Monday, January 3, 2022, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles to bomb another poultry barn, known as known the “Radwan al-Afandi Poultry House” north of [Armanaz](#) town in the western countryside of Idlib governorate. The airstrike injured several civilians including children, [in addition to causing massive destruction to the three-story building housing the poultry facility, as well as severely damaging equipment there](#). The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



destruction due to Russian airstrike on “Radwan al-Afandi” Poultry House in Armanaz town - Idlib on January 3, 2022. Photo by: Saad Eddin Zeidan

On Thursday, 12 May 2022, a fixed-wing warplane, believed to be Russian, used missiles to bomb another poultry barn near Mantaf village in Jabal al-Arbaeen area in the southern countryside of Idlib governorate, injuring one civilian, in addition [to partially destroying the poultry barn building and damaging the surrounding area, as well as killing dozens of hens](#). The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



V. Russian Military Intervention is Illegitimate

In the information provided above, we've summarized some of the most serious violations of international law committed by Russian forces in Syria, some of which, such as killing and forced displacement, amount to crimes against humanity. However, Russia constantly and repeatedly proclaims to the world that its intervention in Syria is legal, based on "the principle of invitation in international law", and the fact that Bashar al-Assad asked Russia to intervene militarily, insisting that the hereditary regime is a democratically elected and legitimate government in Syria. Russia also relies on [Security Council Resolution 2249 of November 2015](#), which was adopted nearly two months after its intervention. The resolution called upon "Member States that have the capacity [...] to take all necessary measures [...] to prevent and suppress terrorist acts [...] on the territory under the control of ISIL also known as Da'esh, in Syria and Iraq."

We in SNHR, believe that the Russian military intervention in Syria is illegitimate for the following reasons:

1. For an intervention to be valid due to an invitation being issued, the state's approval alone is not sufficient cause. Rather, the authority issuing the invitation must itself be legitimate. The Syrian regime which seized power through transparently fraudulent elections held in an environment of coercion, intimidation, repression and terror by security services, lacks any such legitimacy, with no free and fair elections taking place to legitimize it, or any constitution being legally written. It is, instead, a wholly illegitimate dictatorship that is hostile to the most basic principles of human rights. In addition to this, the Syrian regime is engaged in committing crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, according to the reports of the UN Commission of Inquiry and numerous other entities, with many other reasons also voiding any claim to legitimacy by the current Syrian regime.
2. Russia's military intervention violates Russia's obligations under international law. Russia's intervention on the side of a regime involved in crimes against humanity, including torture, the use of chemical weapons, enforced disappearance, etc., violates many peremptory norms of international law and even makes it an accomplice to the violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime.
3. The Russian forces themselves have committed thousands of heinous violations in Syria, some of which, such as extrajudicial executions and enforced displacement, constitute crimes against humanity. Other crimes constitute war crimes, such as bombing hospitals and civil defense centers. These too have been documented in many international reports, as well as in SNHR reports and statements.

VI. Russia's Role Sabotages any Progress Towards Political and Humanitarian Advancement, being a Blatant Attempt to Rehabilitate the Syrian Regime and to Turn Syria into a Testing Ground for Lethal New Weapons

Russia has used its military and political influence to support the Syrian regime in several aspects, most notably in obstructing the UN-sponsored political process, obstructing the UN humanitarian aid delivery, and attempting to reintroduce the Syrian regime.

(1) Obstructing the Process of Political Transition:

Russia has exerted massive diplomatic efforts to block any political solution, from Geneva Communiqué up until now. It has instead attempted to create a political process under its own control, which has become known as the Astana Process. Russia's intervention has also contributed to reducing the political solution to an empty ritual, limited to the formation of an ineffectual constitutional committee that has failed to draft even a single line for years. Since June 2012 up until now, the political process has not advanced by a single step; it is rather in a state of woeful stagnation and regression. Several factors have contributed to this situation, including international indifference to finding a political solution in Syria, but Russia's obstruction has been a decisive factor in thwarting any political transition from dictatorship to a democratic system of government.

(2) The Attempt to Ensure the Syrian Regime's Total Control of UN Humanitarian Aid:

As part of its assistance for the Syrian regime, helping it to have absolute control of the UN aid allocated to northwest Syria and to loot as much of this desperately needed aid as possible, Russia has used its veto over the past year against renewing the mechanism for cross-border aid delivery, particularly for the fourth attempt in this regard.

Russian officials have stated on several occasions that Russia does not see the need for the continuation of cross-border aid delivery to northwest Syria. Dmitry Polyanskiy, Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said [during a Security Council meeting](#) on Syria on 20 May 2022, that the cross-border aid delivery mechanism **"violates Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity."** On 15 June, [Russia's RIA Novosti](#) news agency quoted Alexander Lavrentiev, the Russian President's special representative to Syria, saying that Russia "supports the abolition of the cross-border aid delivery mechanism in Syria," during his speech at the Astana 18th meeting.

In [resolution 2585](#) (July 2021), Russia proposed the concept of crossline assistance, meaning the provision of aid by Syrian regime areas to northern Syria as a prelude to the closure of the only border crossing. Furthermore, Russia again used its veto [power](#) on 8 July 8, 2022, during the meeting of the [UN Security Council](#) to discuss the extension of the cross-border assistance mechanism, through Türkiye to the northwest of Syria. On 12 July, the UN Security Council adopted a draft resolution on the cross-border assistance mechanism to the northwest of Syria submitted by Ireland and Norway. The new UNSCR [2642 \(July 2022\)](#) stipulated the extension of cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery through Bab al-Hawa crossing with Turkey until January 2023.

The resolution indicates that any extension for another six months will require a separate resolution, so Russia introduced a new concept of the mechanism that demands voting on it after six months. This will allow Russia to once again blackmail the United Nations and donor countries and exploit humanitarian assistance as a tool to achieve its goals. [Several SNHR reports](#) have emphasized that the provision of UN cross-border assistance is a legal act which does not require any resolution by the UN Security Council and has warned repeatedly that any across-line assistance provided by the regime will not meet the needs of civilians living in northwest Syria.

(3) Attempts to Rehabilitate the Syrian Regime through the Gate of the Arab League:

Through its strong ally, the Algerian regime, Russia has sought to return the Syrian regime to the Arab League. Algeria has made some effort, so far in vain, to persuade a number of Arab countries not to block the Syrian regime's return to the Arab League. Algeria's position is similar to that of Russia in regard to the demands of the Syrian people for political transition towards a democratic political system. Algeria's regime has voted in favor of the Syrian regime in the Human Rights Council, after being elected to it, it is voting in favor of the Syrian regime nine times, that is, during all the periods in which it was represented in the Human Rights Council. We addressed the subject of the supportive role played by Algeria in the Syrian regime's favor in a [report](#) we issued in March 2022.

(4) Playing the Card of Syrian Refugees:

Russia, and the Syrian regime have continued to promote the frankly ludicrous idea that regime-controlled areas of Syria are safe and stable and are ready to receive returning refugees. At Russia's request, the Syrian regime has continued its promotional campaign calling for the "return of refugees" by holding a series of meetings for what they called "[the International Conference on the Return of Syrian Refugees](#)," the latest of which was [the Fourth Conference](#), which was held on 14 June, 2022.; this farcical process wholly disregards the fact that they, the Russian and Syrian regimes, are the cause of the destruction and displacement of millions of Syrians, as well as the reason refugees don't want to return.

Russia's aim from all of these endeavors is to overcome the Syrian regime's isolation and blackmail European countries through the use of allied extreme right-wing parties, depicting itself as being keen to bring Syrian refugees back to Syria in exchange for funds to pay for reconstruction, presenting the patently false idea that the damaged buildings, vital facilities and infrastructure are the reasons behind refugees' refusal to return.

(5) Turning Syria into a Testing Ground to Test New Russian Weapons:

Russian officials have stated on several occasions that Russia is experimenting with new munitions in Syria and that this is contributing to the increase of Russian forces' combat capabilities. In the seventh year of Russia's intervention in Syria, the Russian forces announced the introduction of new, high-quality weapons for their military arsenal after confirming their effectiveness and 'testing' them in Syria. On 6 December 2021, the Russian [Sputnik](#) agency reported that the Russian army had begun to receive Mi-8AMTSh-VN helicopters. The state news agency's report added, "Their manufacturers have taken into account the experiments in combat of helicopters in the world in general and in Syria in particular, to increase their effectiveness and enhance their ability to withstand the harshest conditions that can be encountered on the battlefield." On 21 December, [the Russia Today news agency](#) reported that Sergei Shoigu, the Russian Minister of Defense, "had briefed the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, on a recent component of the unified system for managing the tactical faction, which was used by the Russian forces in Syria."

On February 15, the [Sputnik News Agency](#) quoted the Russian Ministry of Defense as stating, **"MiG-31K fighter jets and Tu-22M3 bombers carrying the hypersonic (dagger) missiles, have arrived at the Russian Hmeimim Airbase in Syria, within the framework of naval exercises"** held in the Mediterranean by the "Russian Naval Logistics Center" in Tartus. These exercises were attended by Sergei Shoigu, the Russian Minister of Defense, according to a statement published by [the Russian Ministry of Defense](#) on its official website. During the exercises, the Russian army tested the Kinzhal (Dagger) missile. Meanwhile, [the Russian newspaper 'Izvestia'](#) reported on 19 February 2022, that "Russian pilots tested the hypersonic Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles for the first time in Syria." The newspaper added that a new regiment of MiG-31K fighter jets, equipped with Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles, had flown over the Mediterranean for the first time to conduct exercises. The newspaper pointed out that the Kinzhal missile is the latest type of Russian strategic weapons, which was announced by the Russian President Vladimir Putin in a letter to the Russian Federal Assembly in 2018.



[The Russian Ria Novosti News Agency](#) reported on February 18, 2022, quoting a Russian military source that Russian forces in Syria had used a new version of the Lantset-3 suicide drone, capable of carrying a large warhead. The agency also indicated that this plane was used several times in Syria against many targets.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal Conclusions:

1. The Russian regime has long been involved in supporting the Syrian regime, which has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, by providing political support in different international circles, and by providing it with weapons and military expertise. The direct military intervention on the side of the regime since 2015 is a stark manifestation of this support. Such support to a regime involved in crimes against humanity constitutes a clear violation of international law and makes the Russian regime subject to accountability.

2. The Russian military intervention in Syria is wholly illegal, despite taking place at the Syrian regime's request, because the Syrian regime seized power in Syria in an illegitimate manner. In addition, this military intervention has been used to continue the Syrian regime's violations against the Syrian people, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. Thus, Russia's military intervention is a violation of international law and even a form of direct involvement in the crimes perpetrated.

3. Russia has used its UN veto 13 times since its direct military intervention, despite becoming a party to the Syrian conflict. This is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Those vetoes have been employed by the Syrian regime to enjoy impunity for its crimes giving it a sense of absolute immunity from any prosecution. Such use of the UN veto is arbitrary and fundamentally contradicts human rights law.

4. The Russian authorities have not conducted any serious investigations into any of the attacks carried out by their forces included in this report or in any previous reports. The Russian leadership, both military and political, bear responsibility for those attacks, based on the principle of command responsibility under International Humanitarian Law⁵, since they did not prevent the attacks, nor did they punish those responsible. Rather, the widespread and repeated nature of the attacks indicates that they can only be a state policy coming from the very top of the Russian leadership hierarchy, which means that those leadership officials are involved in and should be held accountable for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Therefore, sanctions should be imposed by the world's countries targeting all those involved in these barbaric attacks.

5. The Russian regime has unquestionably violated UN Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which provide for the cessation of indiscriminate attacks. It has also violated Article 8 of the Rome Statute by committing the crime of intentional murder, which constitutes a war crime.

6. We affirm that the incidents of bombardment cited in this report targeted unarmed civilians, which means that the Russian forces have violated the provisions of the International Human Rights Law which protects the right to life. In addition, this bombardment has been carried out extensively in a non-international armed conflict and as a widespread attack in many cases, which amount to war crimes, as these attacks meet all relevant criteria.

7. Russia has hindered the political process and caused a horrific humanitarian crisis for millions of IDPs by preventing the free movement of UN cross-border humanitarian assistance. It has also participated with the Syrian regime in displacing the vast majority of IDPs.

⁵ ICRC, IHL, [article 152](#).
ICRC, IHL, [article 153](#)

Recommendations:

Security Council:

- The use of a UN veto in the case of a state involved in a conflict should not be allowed. Russia is directly involved in the Syrian conflict and is using its UN veto for its own and the regime's benefit, although both are parties to this armed conflict.
- Take further measures following the adoption of UNSCR 2254, which clearly demands that all parties "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."
- Refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court and hold all those involved accountable, including the Russian regime whose involvement in perpetrating war crimes has been proven beyond any doubt.
- Seriously seek to fulfil a political transition towards democratic government in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué and UNSCR 2254.
- Impose UN economic and military sanctions on the Syrian and Iranian regimes which have been directly involved in perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people.

International Community:

- In light of the Security Council's division and complete paralysis, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people, increase support for relief efforts, and endeavor to employ universal jurisdiction for those crimes within national courts in fair trials to hold all perpetrators to account.
- Support the political transition process and put pressure on the parties to oblige them to implement the political transition within no more than six months so that most violations stop, and millions of displaced people can make a safe and stable return to their original homes.
- In light of Russia's continued use of the UN veto, despite the ongoing perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Syrian regime, it is imperative that the international community form an international civilized alliance outside the Security Council with the aim of protecting civilians in Syria from attacks conducted by Russia and the Syrian regime.
- Impose sanctions against the Russian regime for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria, for continuing to violate the sanctions imposed against the Syrian regime, and for assisting it in breaching Security Council resolutions, including those regarding non-recurrence of using chemical weapons and barrel bombs, similar to the sanctions imposed on Russia over its illegal intervention in Ukraine.

- As a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the principle of 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P), in dozens of studies and reports. After exhausting the previous political steps, from the Arab League, then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan and all the following statements calling for the cessation of hostilities and Astana agreements and after the passage of so much time, action should be taken under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to implement the 'Responsibility to Protect' principle, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly. Despite this, however, the UN Security Council is still obstructing the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Put pressure again on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Seek to transfer the subject of addressing the Syrian issue to the UN General Assembly.
- Unequivocally condemn the violations of the Russian regime and compel it to bear its legal and material responsibility for the reconstruction of vital buildings and facilities in Syria that were destroyed in bombardment by Russian forces. Oblige the Russian regime to compensate all victims affected by Russian violations.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Conduct extensive investigations into the incidents included in this report and clearly hold Russian forces responsible if sufficient evidence is found of their involvement.

UN Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights:

- Issue a statement of condemnation of the violations perpetrated by Russian forces in Syria on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of Russia's military intervention in Syria, pointing out clearly the catastrophic repercussions of this intervention on the Syrian people and state and condemning Russia's use of its UN veto in the Syrian regime's favor.

UN Special Envoy to Syria:

- Call for rapid implementation of a democratic political transition process that restores victims' rights and reflects the principles of transitional justice, without limiting this to the moribund political solution in the ineffectual constitutional committee.

The Russian Regime:

- Put an end to support for the current Syrian regime and apologize to the Syrian people for all violations committed by Russian forces.
- Support a genuine political transition away from the hereditary ruling family and brutal security apparatuses, which constitutes the only way to achieve security, stability and reconstruction for the country.
- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make their findings available for the Syrian public and hold the perpetrators accountable.
- Provide compensation for, reconstruct and reequip all damaged centers and facilities, and compensate the families of all victims killed and all survivors wounded in attacks by the current Russian regime.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects and civilian areas and uphold customary humanitarian law.
- Rebuild and restore residential buildings and shops destroyed by Russian military forces and compensate victims for the entire duration of their displacement.

European States and the European Union:

- Impose economic sanctions on Russia for the crimes against humanity and war crimes it has perpetrated in Syria.
- Clearly condemn Russia's heinous violations in Syria and allow the application of universal jurisdiction to prosecute it for those violations.
- Support those displaced as a result of Russia's attacks, especially those living in hundreds of camps northwest Syria and on the Syrian-Turkish borders.

Gratitude and Condolences

We extend our gratitude and deepest condolences to the afflicted and to the victims and their families whose harrowing experiences we have documented in this report. We would also like to thank all locals, activists and victims' families whose contributions make our database and this report possible.



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