

Two Media Workers Killed in Syria, Toll of May 2018

15 Media Workers Killed in 2018



Sunday, June 3, 2018

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

Parties to the conflict have oppressed journalists and citizen journalists to varying extents, committing crimes qualifying as war crimes against them. The Syrian regime, however, is the party who has perpetrated most of these crimes since March 2011, where the Syrian regime has been responsible for up to 83% as it waged a systematic war on media workers, committing hundreds of violations against journalists and citizen journalists, including killing, arrest, and torture in an attempt to conceal the human rights violations that the Syrian people are being subjected to and hide the crimes against Syrian citizens.

On the other hand, ISIS, factions from the armed opposition and Self-Management forces resorted to suppressing views as a policy in their areas of control as seen by the wide arrests they made.

In light of all of that, Syria has fallen to the 177th place (out of 180 countries) according to the Reports Without Borders' [Press Freedom Index 2018](#)

A journalist is a civilian individual according to the international humanitarian law regardless of their nationality. Any attack deliberately directed against a journalist is considered a war crime. However, when a media worker gets close to action-heavy zones, they are responsible for their own actions where targeting them in such case would be seen as collateral damage. Also, they would lose the right to protection if they were involved in hostilities.



The international humanitarian law states that journalists should be protected, as Article 79 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 says that civilian journalists who are engaged in missions in areas of armed conflict should be respected, considered as civilians, and protected from all forms of deliberate attacks, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians. Additionally, Rule 34 of the international humanitarian law's customary rules states that: "**Civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities.**"

In addition, Security Council adopted Resolution 2222 on May 27, 2015, which condemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict,

Methodology

This report monitors the most notable violations against media workers (journalists and citizen journalists) in May by the parties to the conflict.

SNHR defines a citizen journalist as anyone who plays a significant role in reporting and publishing news. He is not necessarily impartial as a journalist should be. In case a citizen journalist bore arms and was directly engaged in hostilities, he would be no longer deemed a citizen journalist whereas it is possible that he would be referred to as a citizen journalist again, provided he retires completely from military action.

This report draws upon, firstly, on the daily, ongoing documentation and monitoring efforts by SNHR team, and, secondly, on accounts from survivors, eyewitnesses, and local media workers that we've talked to via phone or social media. We have also analyzed a large number of the videos and pictures that were posted online or we received from local activists via e-mail, Skype, and social media. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report in a secret online database, as well as backup copies on hard drives. We always make sure to store this data with its respective source. Nonetheless, we can't claim that we have documented all cases, in light of the ban and pursuit by Syrian regime forces and some of the other armed groups.

Please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [documenting victims](#).

This report contains two accounts that we've collected through speaking directly to eyewitnesses, and not are cited from any open sources. We have explained the purpose of these



interviews for the eyewitnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided without offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR tried to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible, and gave assurances to conceal the identity of any witness who preferred to use an alias.

The report might include incidents that we believe do not constitute violations of the international humanitarian law. We include it, however, to preserve the truth historically and store it as a national record, but we don't describe it as having qualified as crimes.

II. May Outline

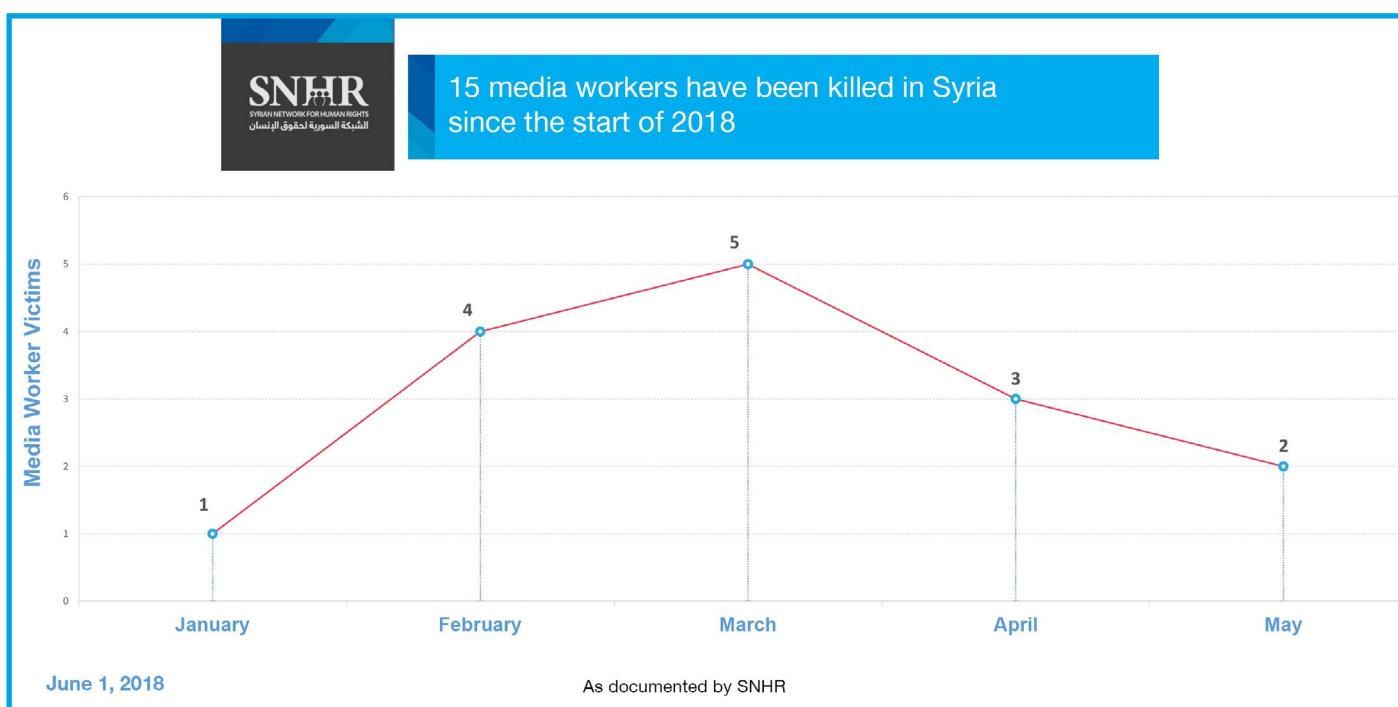
May saw a number of agreements that resulted in the Russia-backed Syrian regime forces completely taking over the south region of the capital Damascus, as well as areas in northern suburbs of Homs, as the residents of those areas were forcibly displaced to north Syria. In the wake of those agreements, the rate of bombardment by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on most of the areas have noticeably dropped, which reflected on the civilian death toll, including media workers.

On the other hand, there has been a notable rise in bombing incidents and killing by gunshots in most of the areas which are outside the control of Syrian regime forces.

III. Executive Summary

A. Death toll among media activists since the start of 2018

SNHR has documented that 15 media workers have been killed between the start of 2018 and June of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria. Death toll is distributed by month as follows:



B. Violations against media workers in May 2018

Violations against media workers in May 2018 were distributed as follows:

- **Acts of killing:** SNHR has documented the killing of two media workers at the hands of other parties.

- **Injuries:** we have recorded that one media worker was injured by other parties.

IV. Details

Other parties

- Acts of killing

Abdul Mun'im Awwad Zakariya

Thursday, May 3, 2018, Abdul Mun'im died of injuries in the head and chest caused by shrapnel from an IEM bombing that was planted inside a motorbike on the highway to the west of Saraqeb city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Abdul Mun'im, a media worker who works with the "Free" Police Station in Saraqeb city, from Saraqeb city, born in 1991, has an intermediate education degree, married and a father of one female child.



Abdul Mun'im Zakariya

SNHR contacted the media worker Mahmoud Bakkour¹, a colleague of Abdul Mun'im's, who told us that two "Free" policemen headed with Abdul Mun'im to the highway, west of Saraqeb city, after they were contacted over a suspicious object in a motorbike there. As they got to the site, around 19:40, they got close to the motorbike to examine it, and the planted IEM exploded: "**Abdul Mun'im was rushed to the Martyr Odai al Hussein Hospital where he died as soon as he got there due to his severe head injuries. Also, a member of the Free Police died subsequently of his wounds.**" Mahmoud added that he saw Abdul Mun'im's dead body when it was delivered to his home, and he took part in the funeral.

¹ We contacted him via Facebook on May 23, 2018



Ibrahim Abdul Razzaq al Mnajjer

Thursday, May 17, 2018, Ibrahim suffered a number of gunshots to the neck and chest, fired by gunmen in front of his house in Seyda, eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group who shot Ibrahim. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Ibrahim a reporter for Sham News Network and the website Sy24, from Tal Shehab town, western suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1992, a third-year university student who was studying at the College of Literature and Human Sciences of Damascus University – English language department, married and a father of one female child.

The media worker Mohammad al Refa'i², a friend of Ibrahim's, told SNHR that their mutual friend Sharif Affoush, who was present at the time of the incident, told him that unknown gunmen shot Ibrahim using an AK in front of his house: **"He was injured in the chest and neck, and was rushed to Seyda Makeshift Hospital, where he died about an hour later."**

Mohammad added that he suspects that the gunmen were from ISIS.

- Injuries

Wasim Eisa

Sunday, May 6, 2018, SANA said that Wasim was severely injured, mostly in his legs, by a landmine that exploded as he was covering clashes between Syrian regime forces and ISIS on the battlefield of al Hajar al Aswad neighborhood, southern Damascus city. Pro-Syrian regime accounts posted pictures of Wasim after he had both of his legs amputated. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group who implanted the landmine.

Wasim, a reporter for the Republican Guard, from Mesyaf area, southwestern Hama governorate.



Ibrahim al Mnajjer



Wasim Eisa

² We contacted him via Facebook on May 23, 2018



V. Recommendations

Security Council

Work on fighting the policy of impunity by referring the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

OHCHR

Condemn the targeting of media workers in Syria and shed light on their sacrifice and suffering.

Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations into the targeting of media workers specifically, given their integral role in recording incidents in Syria.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International and Arabic media institutions

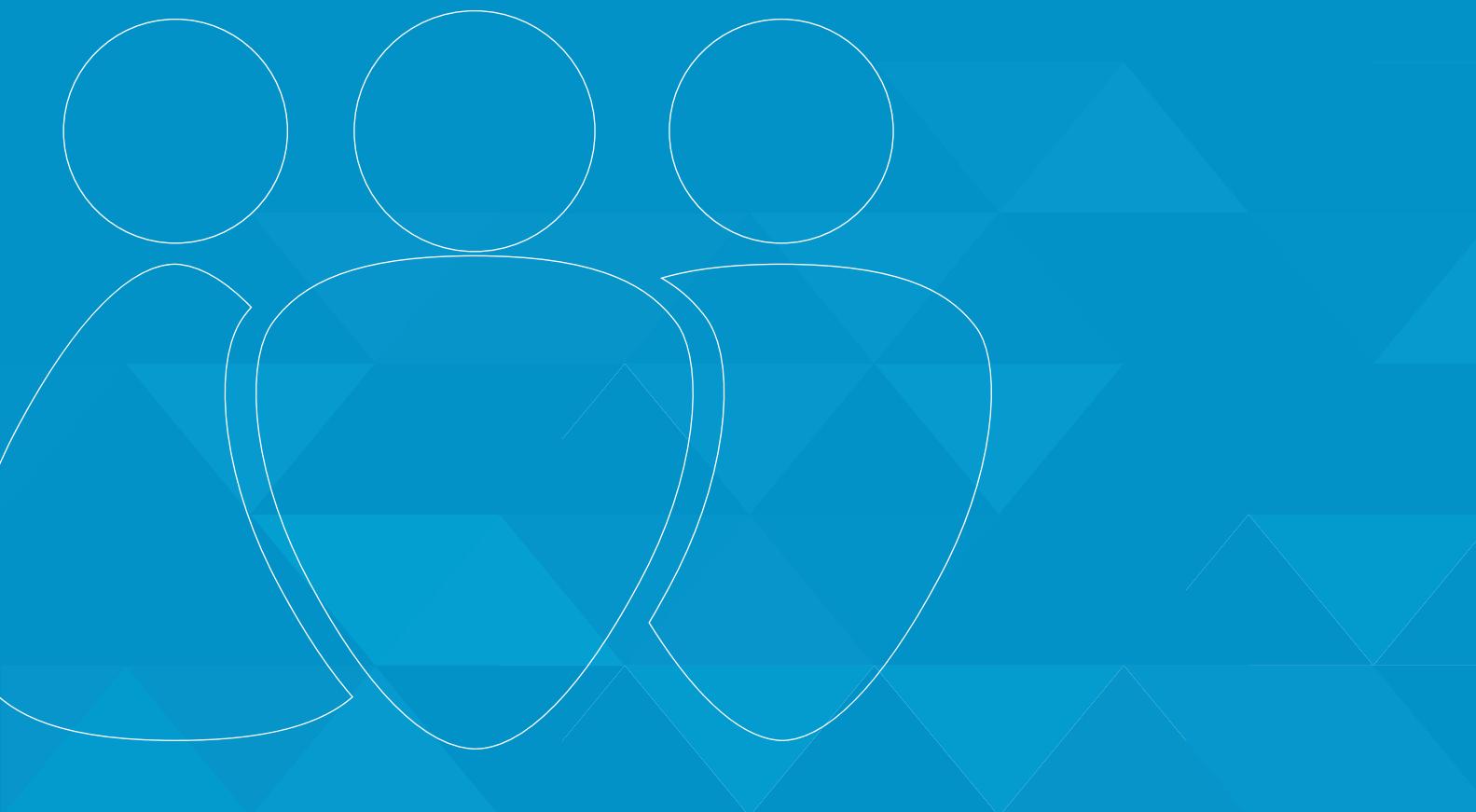
Support their colleagues in the field of media by releasing regular reports that shed light on their daily suffering and memorialize their sacrifice. Also, they should contact their families to console them.

Finally, all parties have to respect the international humanitarian law in their areas of control with respect to the protection of civilians and especially media workers and their equipment.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most heartfelt condolences go to the victims' families. We also would like to thank the friends and families of media workers who contributed effectively to this report.





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