

One Media Activist Killed and Nine Injured, Toll of January 2018

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Saturday, February 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.



Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Details
- IV. Recommendations

I. Introduction

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](#), who described Syria as “the world’s deadliest country for journalists.”

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 to 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 January 2018 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 10 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 insurances 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. Executive Summary

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

- **Acts of killing:** SNHR has documented the killing of one media workers by Syrian regime forces.

- **Injuries:** we have recorded that nine media workers were injured, as follows:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 3
- Russian forces: 6

III. Details

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)

- Acts of killing

Hazem Abdul Aziz Abdul Wahed

Tuesday, January 9, 2018, Hazem died of [injuries](#) in the head caused by shrapnel from a bombardment by [fixed-wing](#) Syrian regime forces warplanes who fired one missile that landed near his house in Saqba city, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident. Hazem, a photographer for [Nabd Institution](#), from Harran al Awamid, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1986, has a high school diploma, married and a father of three children.



Hazem Abdul Wahed

Omran Abu Salloum¹, a media worker and a colleague of Hazem's, told us that Hazem was at his house in Saqba city when he was bombed by Syrian regime warplanes: **“The shrapnel mostly injured his head, especially his face. He was immediately taken to the hospital. However, the doctors couldn't save him and he died a few hours later.”** Omran added that the bombardment on that day destroyed a four-floor building and two houses completely, as well as causing moderate damages to the nearby buildings.

¹ We contacted him via Facebook on January 14, 2018



- Injuries

Yaman Khaled al Sayyed

Tuesday, January 2, 2018, Yaman was [injured](#) in his [head and right foot](#) by [shrapnel](#) from a bombardment by [fixed-wing Syrian regime forces](#) warplanes who fired [a missile](#) that landed near him as he was covering the bombardment in Irbeen city, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. Irbeen city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident. Yaman, [a reporter](#) for [Orient TV Channel](#), from Irbeen city, born in 1992, a second-year college student at the college for economics, married and a father of two.



Yaman al Sayyed

Yaman told us² that he was injured by a bombing by warplanes as he was covering the bombing on Irbeen city that resulted in a number of casualties and a huge destruction in the targeted areas: **“I was taken immediately to Irbeen Hospital where they stitched my head and underwent a surgical procedure to install a metal bar in my right leg.”**

Hatem Shaher al Zu’bi

Sunday, January 28, 2018, Hatem was [injured](#) by shrapnel in both of his feet after [a mortar](#) shell fired by Syrian regime forces artillery landed near him as he was working on a report documenting the breaches by Syrian regime forces to the de-escalation agreement in Daraa al Balad in the middle of Daraa city. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident. Hatem, a reporter for Zaman al Wasl Newspaper and Tajamou’ Ahrar Houran, from al Yadouda town, western suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1993, a second-year college student at the college for literature and human sciences – English language department, unmarried.



Hatem al Zu’bi

Hatem told us³ that the Syrian regime artillery fired a number of mortar shells at Daraa al Balad area as he was working on a report on the breaches by Syrian regime forces to the de-escalation agreement: **“A shell landed near me, and the shrapnel injured both my feet. I was taken to Daraa al Balad Hospital where they found I had a fracture in my left foot.”** Hatem added that a man lost both of his feet in the bombardment while a child was wounded.

² We contacted him via Facebook on January 6, 2018

³ We contacted him via Facebook on February 1, 2018



Basel Adnan al Ghazawi

Sunday, January 28, 2018, Basel was [injured](#) in his left foot by a shrapnel after [a mortar shell](#) fired by a Syrian regime forces artillery landed near him as he was working on a report documenting the breaches by Syrian regime forces to the de-escalation agreement in Daraa al Balad in the [middle of Daraa city](#). The area was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Basel, a reporter for Orient TV Channel, from al Yadouda town, western suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1992, a second-year college student at the college for economics – business management department, married and a father of two.



Basel al Ghazawi

Basel told us ⁴ that around 14:30 on Sunday, January 28, a Syrian regime artillery fired a mortar shell at al Bahar neighborhood in Daraa al Balad area that landed near him, as a shrapnel injured his left foot: **“I was taken to Daraa al Balad area, where they extracted the shrapnel from my foot.”**

B. Russian forces

- [Injuries](#)

Hussein Khaled al Tawil

Thursday, January 11, 2018, Hussein was [injured in most of his body](#) by shrapnel from a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired a missile that landed near him, as he was covering “Rad al Tughyan” Battle (Repelling Tyranny) between Syrian regime forces, on one side, and factions from the armed opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham from the other side on the battlefield of al Khwyen village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

Hussein, a reporter for al Yaum TV Channel, from Kafr Nobbol city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1983, has a high school diploma, married.



Hussein al Tawil

We contacted Hussein who told us that he was injured along with the media workers Abdul Qader al Abdo and al Abdul Qader al Bakri as they were covering the developments on the battlefield of al Khwyen in Idlib governorate: **“Russian warplanes carried out a strike while we were there. The shrapnel injured most of my body, and I was taken to the hospital where the doctors told me that I sustained fractures in one of my ribs and my left shoulder.”**

⁴ We contacted him via WhatsApp on February 1, 2018

⁵ We contacted him via Facebook on January 16, 2018



Abdul Qader al Abdo “name was concealed for security concerns”

Thursday, January 11, 2018, he was [injured](#) by shrapnel in both of [his feet](#) from a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired a missile [that landed](#) near him, as he was covering “Rad al Tughyan” Battle (Repelling Tyranny) between Syrian regime forces, on one side, and factions from the armed opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham from the other side on the battlefield of al Khwyen village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. Abdul Qader, [a reporter for al Jesr TV Channel](#), from Ma’aret Harma village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1983, a second-year college student at the faculty of law at Damascus University “open learning”, married.



Abdul Qader al Abdo

Abdul Qader confirmed to us ⁶ that he was injured by shrapnel in both of his feet as he was covering on the battlefield of al Khwyen in Idlib on Thursday, January 11, when Russian warplanes fired missiles loaded with cluster submunitions ⁷ near him: **“The rebels took me to Ma’aret al Nu’man Hospital where I was examined and x-rayed. They let me about an hour later as my situation wasn’t serious.”**

Abdul Qader Mohammad al Bakri

Thursday, January 11, 2018, he was injured in [his right foot](#), chest, and abdomen by shrapnel from a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired [a missile](#) that landed near him, as he was covering “Rad al Tughyan” Battle (Repelling Tyranny) between Syrian regime forces, on one side, and factions from the armed opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham from the other side on the battlefield of al Khwyen village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

Abdul Qader, [a reporter](#) for [Qasyoun News Agency](#), from al Taman’a town, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1991, a fourth-year college student at the college for literature and human sciences – department of history, unmarried.



Abdul Qader al Bakri

⁶ We contacted him via WhatsApp on February 1, 2018

⁷ The use of cluster munitions in this attack is still under investigations by SNHR at the time of this writing



We contacted Abdul Qader ⁸ after he had gotten better: **“The shrapnel from the cluster missile ⁹ that landed near me caused severe injuries. I was taken to Ma’aret al Nu’man Hospital, where I underwent a surgery in the abdomen to remove the shrapnel. I remained in the ICU for five days.”** Abdul Qader added that he was transferred to the hospital at Baba al Hawa crossing because of the heavy bombing on Ma’aret al Nu’man city: **“I am currently recovering, thanks to God.”**

Shaher Yahya Sammaq

Monday, January 29, 2018, he was [injured](#) by a shrapnel in [his head](#) from a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired [little missiles](#) near where he was at Oday Hospital as he was taking footage for the wounded in the hospital after a previous bombing by the same warplanes on the potato market in Saraqeb city, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Shaher, [a reporter for Orient TV Channel](#), from Binnesh city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1990, a second-year college student at the college for literature and human sciences – English language department, married.



Shaher told us ¹⁰ that Russian warplanes carried out an airstrike on a hospital in Saraqeb city as he was taking footage for the injuries that arrived at the hospital in the aftermath of a previous bombing by the same warplanes on the potato hospital in the city: **“I was injured by a shrapnel in my head, so I was taken to a medical point in Binnesh city, then to another medical facility in Idlib city, before I was brought back to Binnesh.”**

⁸ We contacted him via WhatsApp on January 26, 2018

⁹ The use of cluster munitions in this attack is still under investigations by SNHR at the time of this writing

¹⁰ We contacted him via Facebook on January 31, 2018



Radwan Jamal Mhayyar

Monday, January 29, 2018, Radwan was injured by shrapnel in [his right hand](#) and [right foot](#) from a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired little missiles near where he was at Oday Hospital as he was taking footage for the wounded in the hospital after a previous bombing by the same warplanes on the potato market in Saraqeb city, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident. Radwan, known as Abu Yazan al Homsy, a reporter for Smart Agency, from Baba Amr neighborhood, Homs city, born in 1990, second-year college student at the college for physical education, married and a father of two children.



Radwan Mhayyar

Radwan told us¹¹ a few days after his injury: **“On Monday, January 29, Russian warplanes carried out an airstrike on the potato market in Saraqeb city, so I headed there and documented the massacre, and then I went to Oday Hospital, where the wounded were taken, and started, with my colleague Basel Hawa, collecting accounts to complete the investigations.”** Radwan added that the same warplanes returned and carried out an airstrike on the hospital: **“I was taken to a medical facility in Binnesh city, where x-ray showed that I sustained a fracture in my right hand, which was splinted.”**

Mohammad Basel Omar Hawa

Monday, January 29, 2018, Mohammad sustained bruises in [most of his body](#) from a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired [little missiles](#) near where he was at Oday Hospital as he was taking footage for the wounded in the hospital after a previous bombing by the same warplanes on the potato market in Saraqeb city, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Mohammad Basel Hawa

¹¹ We contacted him via WhatsApp on January 26, 2018



Mohammad Basel, a reporter for Smart Agency, from Binnesh city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1988, has a degree from the Arabic Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport – mechanical engineering department, married and a father of two children.

Mohammad Basel told us ¹² that Russian warplanes carried out a missile airstrike on Oday Hospital in Saraqeb city as he was working, with his colleague Radwan Mhayyar, on collecting accounts from the survivors of a previous bombing by the same warplanes on the potato market in the city: **“I was taken to a medical facility in Binnesh city, where the examination showed that I sustained bruises in most of my body.”**

IV. 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 on 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 publishing periodic reports that shed light on their daily suffering and memorialize their sacrifice. Also, they must contact their families to console them.

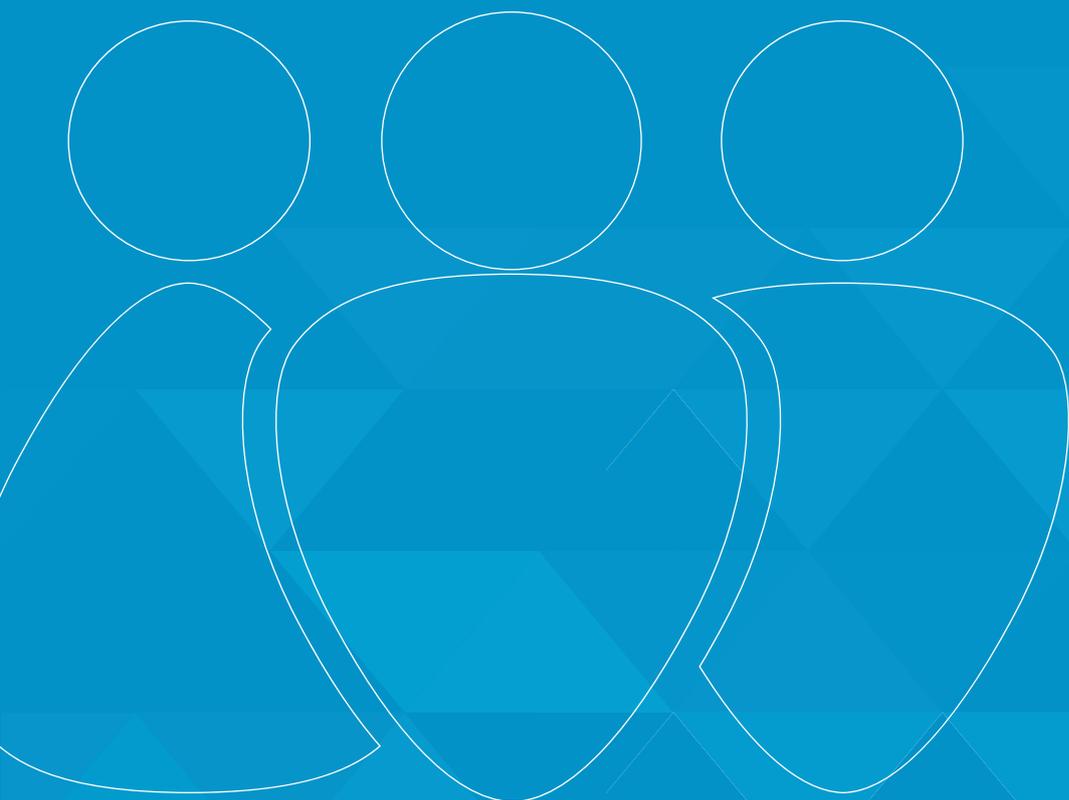
Finally, all parties have to respect the international humanitarian law in their areas of control with respect to the protection of civilians and especially media workers and their equipment.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

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

¹² We contacted him via WhatsApp on February 1, 2018





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

