

No less than 634 Barrel Bombs in January 2017

Despite the Ceasefire Agreement, Barrel Bombs are Being Dropped at the same Rates as prior to the Agreement

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



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I. Introduction

On December 30, 2016, a comprehensive ceasefire was announced in Syria under a Russian-Turkish sponsorship. The parties signing to the statement - the Syrian regime, on one hand, and armed opposition factions, on the other hand, pledged to cease all combat operations including aerial airstrikes, and cease all raids and advancements on the ground. However, military ISIS-held areas (Self-proclaimed the Islamic State) were excluded from the agreement. Nevertheless, the Syrian regime didn't stop targeting wide areas with barrel bombs over the past month, despite the agreement, as we didn't record any decline in barrel bombs usage rates in comparison with December 2016.

Vitaly Churkin, the Russian representative to the United Nations, said that the Syrian regime has stopped using barrel bombs. However, the daily monitoring and documentation conducted by SNHR prove, beyond any doubt, otherwise as the Syrian regime continues to kill and destroy Syria by dropping hundreds of barrel bombs. In this report, we are going to highlight the incidents in which we documented the use of barrel bombs particularly with place, date, and pictures. This report is a monthly report by SNHR.

Being a distinctively indiscriminate weapon with huge destructive impact, the barrel bomb doesn't only kill civilians but also terrorizes and displaces residents in light of the destruction it creates. Dropping barrel bombs from warplanes in this savage and primitive manner amounts to a war crime. Every barrel bomb dropped is considered a war crime.



According to SNHR's violations archive, the first notable use of barrel bombs by Syrian regime forces (Army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias) was on Monday, January 1, 2012 against the residents of Salqin city in Idlib governorate. Barrel bombs is a locally-made weapon which is used by Syrian regime forces due to the fact that it costs notably less than missiles and it has a huge destructive impact. The use of barrel bombs is based on the principle of free fall and it weighs sometimes more than one-fourth ton and it is a distinctively indiscriminate weapon. even if barrel bombs killed an armed man, this would be an accident as 99% of the victims killed by barrel bombs are civilians and the percentage of women and children victims varies between 12% to 35% in some cases.

Security Council adopted Resolution 2139 on February 22, 2016 which specifically condemns the use of barrel bombs: "cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs." Nonetheless, Syrian regime forces are still dropping tens of barrel bombs on armed opposition-held areas.

In some cases, we documented the use of barrel bombs that is loaded with poison gases by Syrian regime forces which is a violation of Security Council Resolution 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013, and Resolution 2209, adopted on March 6, 2015.

This report monitors the number of barrel bombs that were dropped across Syria, the death toll it causes, and the destruction of most notable vital facilities caused by barrel bombs. In light of the difficulties our teams encounter, it should be noted that this the bare minimum of the actual magnitude of crimes.

The only party that possesses warplanes and helicopters is the ruling regime. However, the regime denies that it is using barrel bombs the same way it denies perpetrating other violations such as murder, arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture among others. In contrast, the regime denies the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic access to Syria, and bans local and international human rights organizations and independent media. Therefore, this report doesn't include the remaining three parties (Self-management forces, extremist Islamic groups, and armed opposition factions) as none of them has as an air force.

All the reports and studies done by SNHR show that most of the attacks were deliberately against residential areas and vital centers in order to demolish any chances to establish

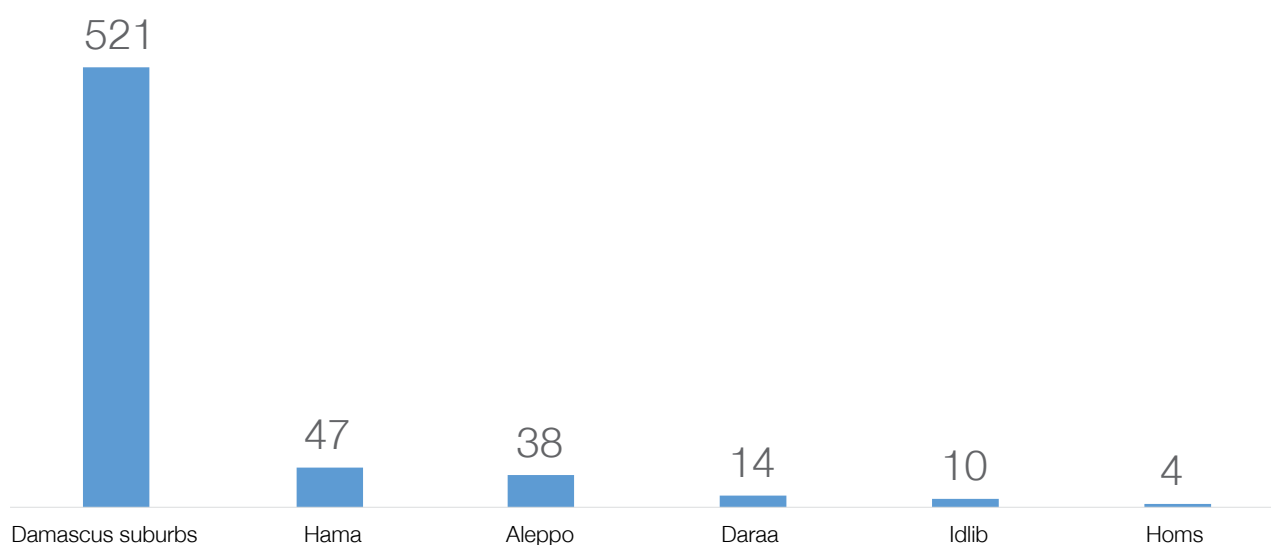


an alternative state and an alternative authority in the areas that are not controlled by Syrian regime forces. Otherwise, what is the point of targeting areas that are tens of kilometers away from the frontlines?

II. Executive Summary

A. Use of barrel bombs

Through daily monitoring and documenting, SNHR team was able to record that no less than 634 barrel bombs at least were dropped in January 2017 by the Syrian regime forces helicopters. Those barrel bombs are distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



According to SNHR's victim documentation team, 8 civilians, including two children and two women, were killed in barrel bombs attacks. The death toll caused by barrel bombs in January is distributed as follows:

Damascus suburbs: 5 civilians including two children and two women

Homs: 3 civilians

B. Incidents of attacks against vital facilities that involved the use of barrel bombs

Due to the widespread use of barrel bombs, it is impossible to record all forms of destruction caused by barrel bombs. Therefore, we are going to focus on protected objects and vital facilities such as markets, hospitals, schools and places of worship....

The use of barrel bombs by the Syrian regime helicopters in the month of January 2017 caused damages to two civil defense facilities.



II. Details

A. Most notable deaths caused by barrel bombs

Damascus suburbs governorate

Sunday, January 8, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Bassima town in Wadi Barada area in northwestern Damascus suburbs governorate, which resulted in the killing of one woman. The town was, at the time of the incident, under the control of armed opposition factions with a minor presence for some Fateh Al Sham Front members, whereas it is currently under the control of Syrian regime forces.

Wednesday, January 11, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Ain Al Khadra village in Wadi Barada area in northwestern Damascus suburbs governorate, which resulted in the killing of four civilians from the same family (Two children and their parents). The village was, at the time of the incident, under the control of armed opposition factions with a minor presence for some Fateh Al Sham Front members, whereas it is currently under the control of Syrian regime forces.

Homs governorate

Wednesday, January 4, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Jabiriya village, located in the eastern suburbs of Homs governorate and is under the control of ISIS, which resulted in the killing of three civilians.

B. Incidents of attacks against vital facilities that involved the use of barrel bombs

Infrastructures

- Civil defense facilities

Tuesday, January 3, 2017, around 14:15, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped two barrel bombs near the civil defense center of Khan Shaikhoun city, located in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate and is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh Al Sham Front. The center building was slightly damaged. In addition, the glass windows of a vehicle used to remove rubbles, which belongs to the center, were shattered.



IV. Appendixes and Attachments

Picture showing the place where barrel bombs were dropped by Syrian regime forces helicopters on the outskirts of Khan Shaikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, Tuesday, January 3, 2017



[Video](#) showing Syrian regime forces helicopters dropping a number of barrel bombs on Bassima town in Wadi Barada area in the northwestern suburbs of Damascus suburbs governorate, Tuesday, January 10, 2017

[Video](#) showing Syrian regime forces helicopters dropping four barrel bombs on Bassima town in Wadi Barada area northwestern Damascus suburbs governorate, Wednesday, January 11, 2017

[Video](#) showing a barrel bomb being dropped by Syrian regime helicopters and its explosion in Al Latamna city in the northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, Sunday, January 22, 2017



V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

- 1- The Syrian government has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and Security Council Resolution 2254. Syrian regime forces used barrel bombs in a widespread and systematic manner and violated, through the crime of willful killing, Article 7 of the Rome Statute in a widespread and systematic manner as well which constitutes crimes against humanity. Additionally, the Syrian government violated many rules of the international humanitarian law by perpetrating tens of crimes that amount to war crimes which manifested in the indiscriminate and random bombardment that was also disproportionate due to the use of excessive force.
- 2- SNHR can confirm that the bombardment using barrel bombs is an indiscriminate bombardment that targeted unarmed civilians. Thus, Syrian regime forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, considering that these crimes were perpetrated during non-international armed conflict, these crimes amount to a war crime where all the elements of a war crimes were fulfilled.
- 3-the Indiscriminate attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces are considered a violation of the customary humanitarian international law, where Syrian regime forces fired shells on residential areas and it wasn't directed against a specific military target.
- 4- These attacks, especially bombardment, have caused collateral damages that involved casualties, injuries, and great damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators that suggest that the damage was considerably excessive in relation to the estimated military benefit.
- 5- The magnitude of the widespread frequent bombardment, the excessive force, the indiscriminate manner, and the coordinated approach of these attacks must be based on high orders and a state policy.
- 6- Syrian regime forces, including all forms and leaders, are involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people in addition to those who provide Syrian regime forces with financial, political, and military support -such as the Russian government, the Iranian government, and the Lebanese group Hezbollah among others. Also, the companies that supply weapons are considered partners in these crimes and are subject to criminal prosecution.



Recommendations

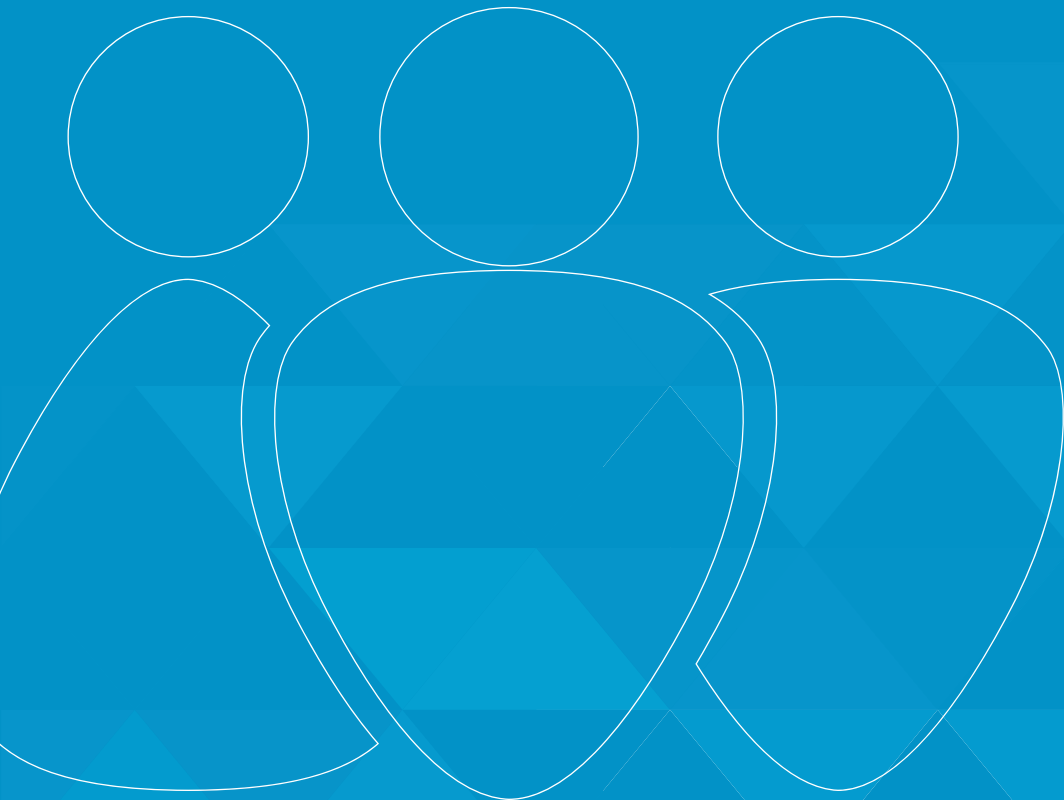
The Security Council

- The Security Council must insure the serious implementation of its Resolutions. These Resolutions have become merely words and, thus, the Security Council has lost all of its credibility and purpose.
- An arms embargo must be imposed on the Syrian government. Also, all those who supply it with weapons and funding must be prosecuted considering the risk that these weapons might be used to commit crimes and serious violations of human rights.
- In the Syrian case, The Security Council is the one who is authorized to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. However, the Security Council has been obstructing this procedure for five years instead of facilitating it and working on instilling peace and security in Syria. The prosecution of everyone involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes must commence immediately.

Acknowledgment and Consolation

Our most heartfelt condolences for the families and friends of the victims, and our thanks go out to all local activists and families who contributed majorly to this study and the investigations.





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