

# **Six Medical Personnel Killed, and 14 Attacks on Vital Medical, Civil Defense, and Red Crescent Facilities in Syria, Toll of April 2018**

32 Medical Personnel Have been Killed  
at the hands of Syrian-Russian Alliance  
Forces in 2018

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Friday, May 4, 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

Since the popular uprising for Democracy started in March 2011, medical facilities and their personnel have seen blatant violations of the international humanitarian law, which established special protection for medical facilities and their personnel, in addition to the general protection for civilians and civilian facilities.

Nonetheless, hospitals, dispensaries, clinics, and pharmacies have been bombed, and hundreds of medical personnel have been arrested while some of them have been tortured to death. Additionally, medical teams and their vehicles have become a target as saving the wounded is branded now as a dangerous profession that might lead to death.

The Syrian regime has been, and still is, the main and primary perpetrator of crimes against medical personnel and their facilities, as its forces have raided hospitals and abducted some of the wounded, and targeted hospitals and medical points using shells, missiles, and barrel bombs, while civil defense facilities have been bombed repeatedly and civil defense personnel have suffered many casualties. Even international humanitarian insignia weren't safe from the attacks that targeted their facilities and killed their personnel despite the fact they are neutral, impartial entities.

We also recorded the use of the double-strike method<sup>1</sup> by Syrian-Russian alliance forces -in many attacks- and the victims in most cases are paramedics and civil defense members. On the other hand, we have documented similar violations by the rest of the parties to the conflict, but to less extents and at smaller rates. ISIS members raided makeshift hospitals and dispensaries and abducted some of the wounded, doctors, and paramedics. Also, ISIS barred some doctors from practicing as per their discriminative laws while the Coalition forces (international coalition and SDF) have targeted a number of hospitals and medical points.

<sup>1</sup> A policy adopted by the Syrian and Russian regimes where they bomb the same site again a few minutes later in order to inflict as much losses as possible in the ranks of civil defense personnel, medical teams, and doctors.



Violations against medical and civil defense personnel does not only impact them, but also extends to the lives of the people who are in need of medical care services, treatment, and rescue. Consequently, these violations result in the death of many of the wounded and those who were trapped in rubble.

**Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:**

“Attacks on medical and civil defense centers as well as medical and civil defense personnel are considered a blatant violation of the international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes given the indiscriminate, and in many cases, deliberate, targeting of protected objects. All of this have only deepened the suffering of the wounded and injured and is one of the main reasons behind the displacement of the Syrian people as it sends a very clear message: there is no safe area, or a red line, including hospitals, you either flee or perish.”

**Methodology**

This report outlines the death toll among medical personnel, civil defense personnel, and Red Crescent personnel who were killed by the parties to the conflict in April, and the attacks on their vital facilities, with highlighting the most notable of these incidents. We have the complete details of all attacks stored in SNHR database.

According to SNHR’s methodology, the term “medical personnel” includes all who are active in medical fields, including doctors, paramedics, pharmacists, medical laboratory scientists, and managing officials, in addition to workers who operate and transport medical equipment. Secondly, the term “vital medical facilities” refers to hospitals, medical points, dispensaries, makeshift hospitals, and ambulances.

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. Videos posted by local activists show wide destruction in vital medical facilities, civil defense facilities, and Red Crescent facilities. 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. For more information, please see our methodology for [documenting victims](#) and for [classifying vital civilian facilities](#).



This report contains a number of attacks that were perpetrated by an air force. However, we weren't able to accurately determine the party responsible for those attacks – the Syrian regime or Russian forces. Therefore, we assigned responsibility, in these attacks, to the Syrian/Russian regime forces.

This report also documents a number of bombing incidents that resulted from explosions and crossfires, where we haven't been able to accurately identify the group responsible for it in light of the difficulties in identifying the perpetrator of such bombings. Also, this report contains an attack with rocket shells that we couldn't identify its source accurately, as we haven't been able to visit the site or gather enough evidences that would help identify the source properly.

Most of the attacks we have documented targeted civilian areas, as our investigations have proven, where no military bases or armories were found during or before the attacks. The attacking forces didn't take into consideration the principle of proportionality. We also didn't record that the attacking forces put out warnings for civilians prior to the attack as the international humanitarian law requires.

The type and number of evidences vary from one case to another. In light of the challenges we mentioned above, many of the incidents' legal description change based on new evidences or clues that surface after we had released the report. We add these evidences and clues to our data archive. On the other hand, many incidents don't constitute a violation to the international humanitarian law, but it involved collateral damages, so we record and archive these incidents to know what happened historically and to preserve it as a national record. However, they don't necessarily qualify as crimes.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't cover the social, economic, and mental ramifications.

## II. April 2018 Outline

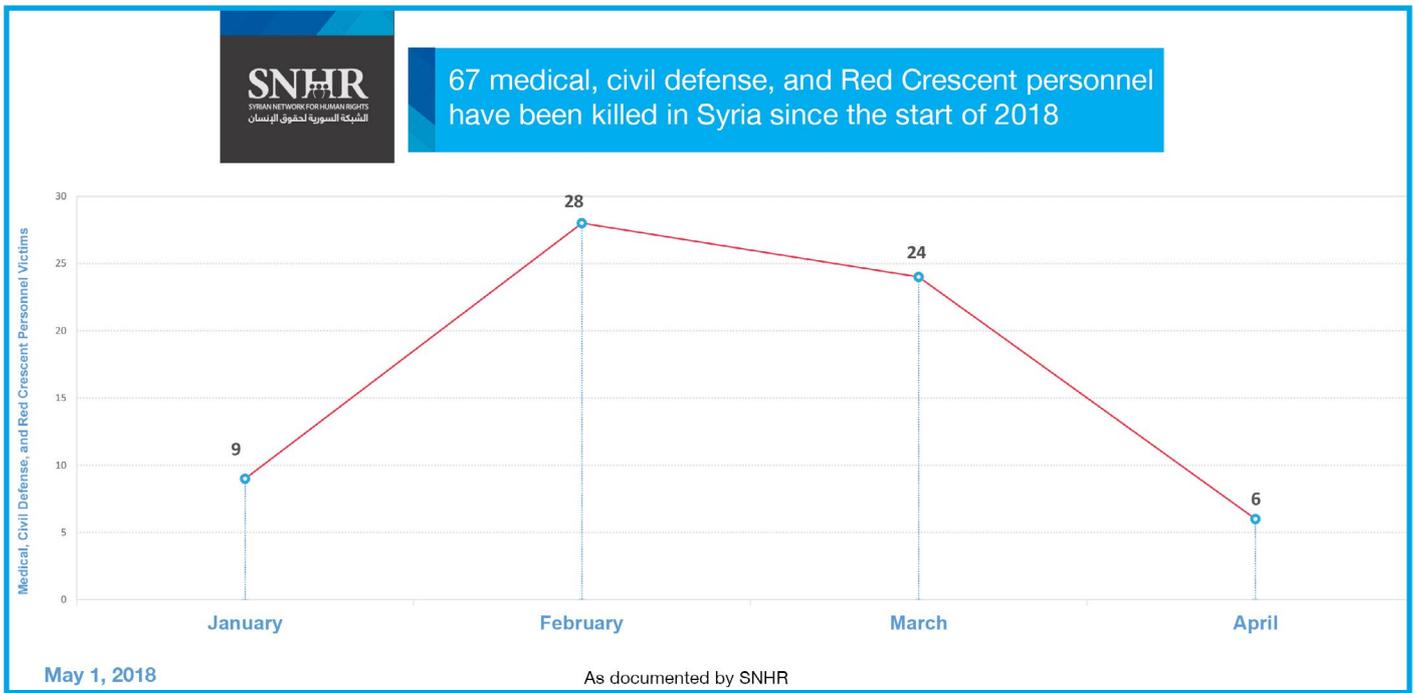
April saw a significant drop in medical personnel deaths and attacks on vital medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent facilities. Syrian regime forces topped all parties with respect to number of attacks, as we've recorded 10 attacks on medical and Red Crescent facilities that were concentrated in Idlib governorate and northern suburbs of Homs governorate.



### III. Executive Summary

#### **A. Medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel victims since the start of 2018**

SNHR has documented the killing of 67 medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2018 and May of the same year, including 42 killed at the hands of Syrian regime forces. Death toll is distributed as follows:

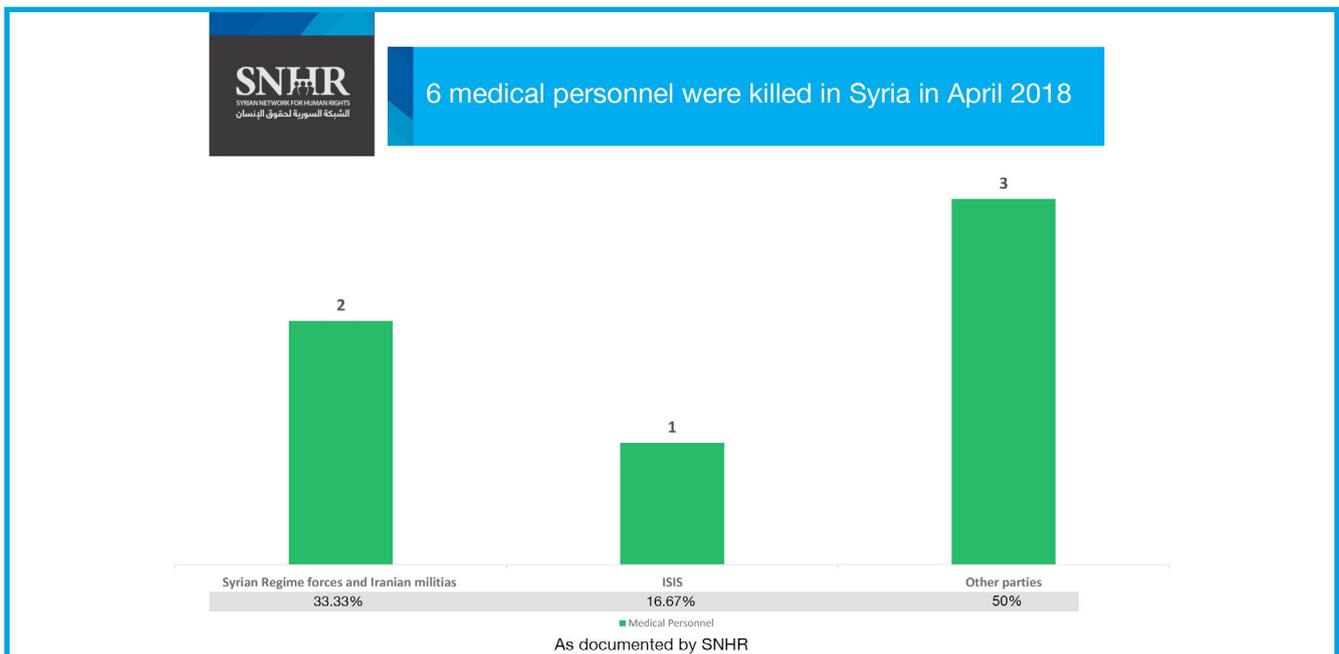


#### **B. Most notable violations in April 2018**

SNHR has documented the following main violations by the parties to the conflict against medical and civil defense personnel and their respective facilities in April 2018.

##### - Acts of killing

We have documented the killing of 6 medical and civil defense personnel, as follows:



**- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**

2, as follows:

- 1 paramedic
- 1 medical personnel

**- Extremist Islamic groups:**

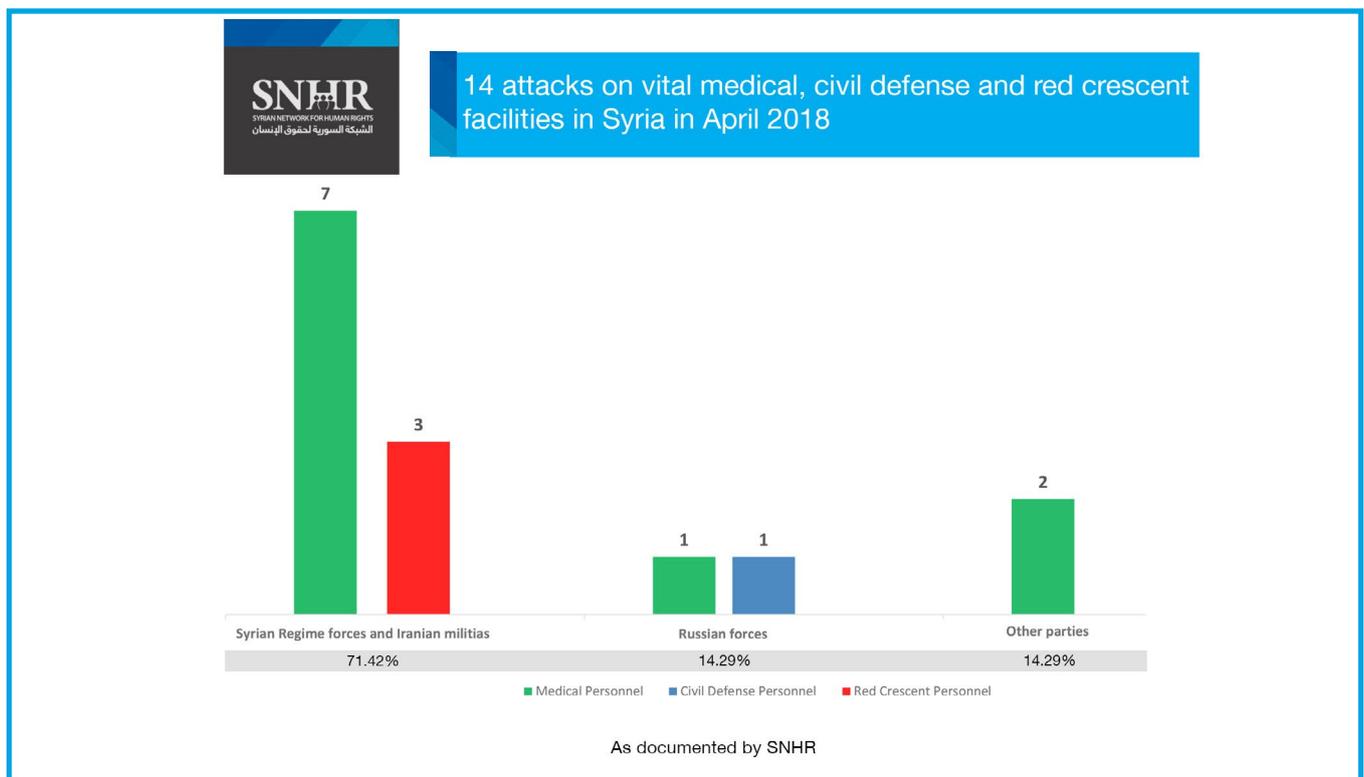
**ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State):** killed 1 doctor

**- Other parties:** 3, including 2 women, as follows:

- 1 doctor (woman)
- 1 pharmacist (woman)
- 1 medical personnel

**- Attacks on vital medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent facilities**

SNHR has documented 14 attacks on vital medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent facilities. Attacks are distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:



**- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**

10 attacks, divided into

- 7 medical facilities
- 3 Red Crescent facilities



- **Russian forces:** 2 attacks, divided into:
  - 1 medical facility
  - 1 civil defense facility
- **Other parties:** 2 attacks on medical facilities

## IV. Most Notable Incidents in April 2018

### A. Acts of killing

#### - **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)**

Jamal Samih Hmaid, [paramedic](#), from al Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian Refugees in south Damascus city. He was killed on Friday, April 20, 2018, in a shelling by Syrian regime forces rocket launchers who fired surface-to-surface missiles near Palestine Hospital in al Yarmouk Camp, as he was tending the wounded from a previous shelling.

#### - **Extremist Islamic groups**

##### - **ISIS**

[Mahmoud Ismail Matar al Naser al Assaf](#), [dentist](#), from Mouhasan city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, 40-year-old, married and a father of three children. He was killed on Friday, April 6, 2018, by a landmine planted by ISIS on Deir Ez-Zour-Raqqa road in al Jazarat area, eastern suburbs of Raqqa governorate.

#### - **Other parties**

Aisha Abdul Aziz al Asaad, a first-year female student at the college of medicine in Idlib University, from Idlib governorate, 18-year-old. She was killed on Monday, April 9, 2018, with her mother and three of her siblings in a bombing that occurred in Wadi al Nasim area in southern Idlib governorate. The bombing was likely caused by a car bomb. We have yet to identify the group that was responsible for the bombing as of this writing on account of the considerable difficulties in identifying the perpetrator in such bombings.

### B. Attacks on vital medical facilities, civil defense facilities, and Red Crescent facilities

#### - **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)**

##### Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Sunday morning, April 1, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes (Su-22) fired a missile near Urm al Jouz Health Center in Urm al Jouz town, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in casualties. Additionally, the facility fence was partially destroyed, while the furniture was moderately damaged. The town was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Saturday, April 7, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) fired a number of missiles in parallel with a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime forces helicopters and a rocket shelling by Syrian regime rocket launchers on Rif Dimashq Specialized Hospital, known as the National Hospital, in [Douma](#) city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. The building and equipment were heavily damaged, as the hospital was rendered out of commission. The city is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this writing, while it was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Sunday, April 29, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired tow missiles near al Za'farana Makeshift Hospital in [al Za'farana](#) village, northern suburbs of Homs governorate. The hospital's upper floor and its cladding materials were moderately damaged. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

### International humanitarian insignia

- Red Crescent

Friday, April 20, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) fired a number of missiles at Palestine Hospital, which is affiliated to the Palestinian Red Crescent in [al Yarmouk Camp](#) for Palestinian Refugees, in southern Damascus city. The hospital building was heavily destroyed, while its equipment was heavily damaged, as the hospital was rendered out of commission. The neighborhood was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

### **- Russian forces**

#### Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Saturday, April 7, 2018, around 23:00, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired six missiles at [Kafr Zita Specialized Hospital](#), which is affiliated to Hama Free Health Administration, in al Gharbi neighborhood, [Kafr Zita city](#), western suburbs of Hama governorate. The hospital building and a number of its wings were [heavily destroyed](#), while its equipment was heavily damaged, as the hospital was rendered out of commission. It should be noted that the hospital was targeted multiple times in March by the same forces. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Destruction in the aftermath of a bombing by warplanes we believe were Russian that fired missiles at Kafr Zita Hospital in Kafr Zita, Hama – April 7, 2018



### Civil defense facilities (facilities - vehicles)

Saturday, April 7, 2018, around 23:00, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired [three missiles](#) at the command of [the north sector building](#), which is affiliated with the civil defense in Kafr Zita city, northern suburbs of Hama governorate. The building was [heavily destroyed](#), while its equipment and furniture were heavily damaged, as the building was temporarily rendered out of commission. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Destruction in the aftermath of a bombing by warplanes we believe were Russian who fired missiles at the civil defense's command of the north sector building in Kafr Zita city, Hama – April 7, 2018

### **- Other parties**

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Sunday, April 15, 2018, clashes between Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and Syrian Liberation Front, an armed opposition faction, near Ma'aret al Nu'man Central Hospital, known as the National Hospital, near northeastern [Ma'aret al Nu'man](#) city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulted in slight damages to the hospital. We haven't been able to identify which of the two groups was responsible for the damages as of this writing. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On the following day, a number of medical groups released [a statement](#) condemning the attack on the hospital.



## V. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The incidents mentioned in this report are considered, beyond any doubt, violations of Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be ceased. Also, these incidents are violations of Article 7 and 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.
- The attacks mentioned in this report constitute violations of Security Council resolution 2286 which states that attacks and threats against the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment should be ceased, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities.
- We can confirm that most of the incidents included in this report have targeted armless civilians. Therefore, Syrian regime forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which amount to a war crime where all elements were fulfilled. Also, Russian forces, ISIS, armed opposition factions, Self-Management forces, international coalition forces, and other parties have committed acts that amount to war crimes through the crime of extrajudicial killing or targeting vital civilian facilities.
- The attacks mentioned in this report are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at populated areas rather than a specific military object.
- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, and significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Security Council**

- The Security Council has to take additional steps after resolutions 2139 and 2254 have been adopted and no pledges to stop the indiscriminate bombing have been made. All parties to the conflict should respect these steps, and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- Expand sanctions to include the Syrian, Russian, and Iranian regimes who were directly involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.
- List the militias who are fighting on the side of the Syrian government and had committed wide massacres - such as Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, other Shiite groups, the National Defense Army, and Shabiha, on the international list of terrorist groups.



- Abstain from considering the Syrian government an official side after it perpetrated crimes against humanity with regard to the relief aspect, and stop giving it the largest portion of financial and other aids as they are being delivered to the people who support the Syrian government instead of people who are truly in-need.

### **International Community**

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

### **OHCHR**

The OHCHR should submit a report the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents included in this report and the massacres that preceded, given that they are a glaring mark in a string of daily sporadic violations of a smaller scope. Also, the OHCHR should work on implementing the recommendations in this report.

### **Commission of Inquiry (COI)**

Launch investigations on the cases included in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.



## **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.

## **European Union and United States of America**

Support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism that was established in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 71/248, adopted on December 21, 2016. And establish local tribunals that enjoy a universal jurisdiction, and address the war crimes that were perpetrated in Syria.

## **The Russian regime**

- Launch investigations regarding the incidents that resulted in civilian casualties, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the people involved accountable.
- Compensate all affected facilities and centers, and reconstruct and rehabilitate them. Also, compensate all the victims' families, who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as the all the wounded.
- Immediately cease bombing hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect the customary international law.

## **The Coalition (international coalition forces and Syrian Democratic Forces)**

- The states of the coalition have to unequivocally and truly acknowledge that some of the bombardment operations have resulted in the killing of innocent civilians. Denying so won't do any good for these governments, as documented human rights reports and residents' accounts explicitly expose this fact. Instead of denying, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and those who were affected.
- The SDF-supporting states should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns that are under their control.
- All forms of support, weapons and otherwise, should be ceased until SDF commit to the previous recommendations. This is primarily the supporting states' responsibility. Providing SDF with weapons and support while knowing that they can be used in war crimes or crimes against humanity can be seen as a contribution to these crimes.



## **Armed opposition factions**

Ensure the protection of vital medical facilities and civil defense facilities and their respective personnel in all areas, and launch investigations on the incidents included in this report.

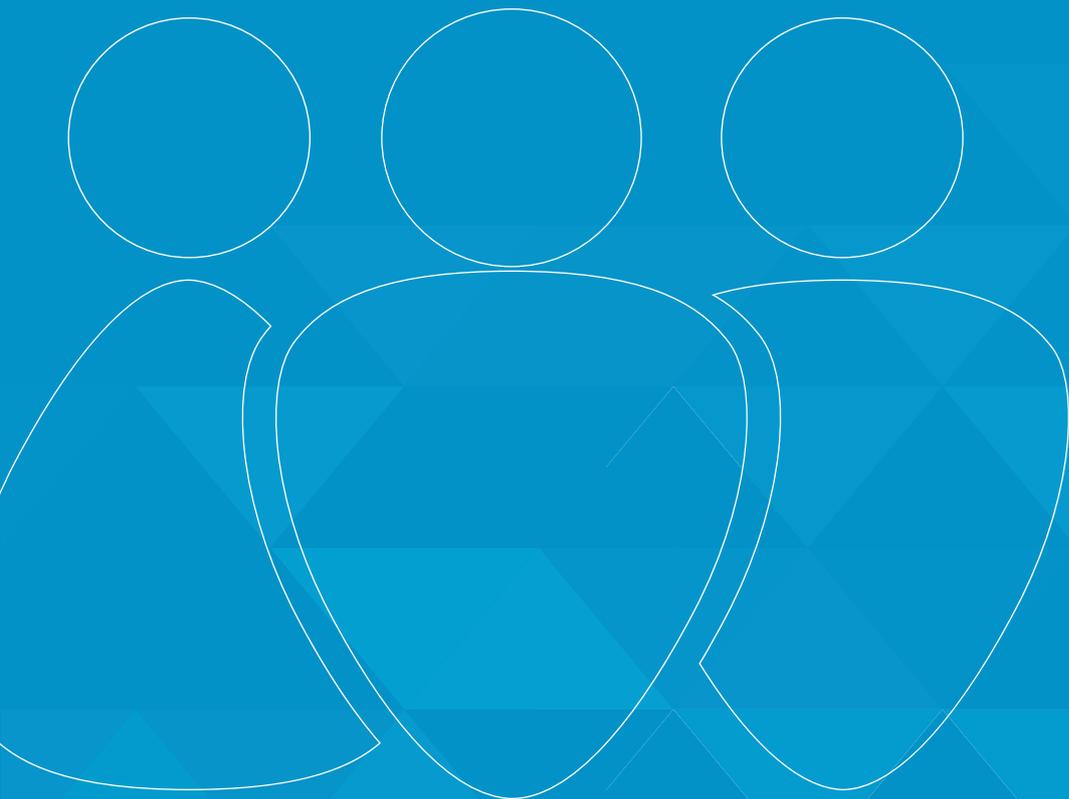
## **Medical organizations around the world**

There is a severe shortage in medical manpower in Syria in light of the ceaseless killing. Firstly, Syrian doctors must come back to Syria to compensate for the severe shortage in medical personnel. Also, international organizations can send volunteers to safe areas where wounded are sent for treatment. We have recorded many cases where wounded died due to lack of medical resources.

## **Acknowledgment and Condolences**

Our most sincere thanks and condolences to the residents and local activists who effectively contributed to this report.





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