



Russian Forces are Killing Civilians in ISIS-held Areas Documenting the Massacre of Al Qouriyah city in Al Mayadein, Deir Ez-Zour

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I. Introduction

Al Qouriyah city is located in Al Mayadein area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour and has a population of no less than 60,000. The city has been under the control of ISIS since July 2014.

Map showing the [location of the city](#)



This report documents a gross massacre that has been perpetrated by allegedly Russian forces in Al Ta'es neighborhood in Al Qouriyah city where SNHR contacted a number of residents, eyewitnesses, and survivors in addition to local media activists. This report includes one account as well as pictures and videos that we have reviewed and verified its authenticity. We have explained to the witnesses the purpose of this interview and they gave us our permission to use the information they provided. Additionally, we have copies of all the pictures and video that are mentioned in this report.

The investigations included in this report show that the targeted areas were civil and there were no military centers or weapon storehouses during or before the attack.





This report only includes the bare minimum of the actual magnitude and severity of the violations that have occurred, and it doesn't cover the social, economic, or psychological effects of the violations.

II. Details

Saturday 25 June 2016, alleged Russian warplanes carried out two airstrikes in which no less than eight missiles were used to target Al Ta'es neighborhood in the middle of Al Qouriya city. The first airstrike targeted residential homes in the neighborhood while the second airstrike targeted the same place after the residents and paramedics arrived to treat the victims of the first bombardment which increased the death toll significantly.

SNHR documented the killing of 62 civilians including 30 children and 20 women. Additionally, 30 others were injured.

We contacted Abu Ahmad, via Facebook, who is a local media activist after he visited the targeted location and told us of what he saw:

"I heard the warplanes flying in the morning, but there was no bombing. Around 12 AM, I heard the sound of the warplanes growing louder and clearer but I still couldn't see it which means that it was flying at a great altitude. The massacre happened shortly after. Four missiles targeted Al Ta'es neighborhood in the middle of the city and I could see the smoke from my home. A few minutes later, the warplanes came back and bombed again."

"I arrived 30 minutes later, the ambulances were still taking the wounded and there were tens of dead bodies and scattered body parts all over the place. The destruction covered an area of more than 300 m². Whole houses were leveled. I counted more than 15 houses and a number of shops that were destroyed."

"The residents I talked to told me that the warplanes targeted the same place with another airstrike after people gathered to aid the wounded from the first airstrike which greatly raised the death toll and the injured numbers. Al Ta'es neighborhood is one of the most populated city in the area and there are no ISIS centers in the neighborhood."





III. Attachments

Victims' names

[Picture of a mass grave](#) for the dead bodies of the massacre of Al Qouriya city.

[Video](#) of the victims who were killed as a result of attacks by alleged Russian forces on Al Qouriya city.

[Video](#) showing the destruction that resulted from the attacks by alleged Russian forces on Al Qouriya city

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

1- The Russian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, the Russian regime violated Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.

2- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted armless civilians. Therefore, the Russian 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.

3- The attacks mentioned in this report, which have been perpetrated by the Russian regime, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area rather than a specific military object.

4- The 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

To the Security Council

- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been involved.
- To instill security and peace in Syria and implement the norm of the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect the lives, culture, and history of the Syrian people from being thieved and ruined.





- To expand the sanctions to include the Russian and Iranian regime who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.

To the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Office must submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on this massacre specifically considering that it was perpetrated by forces which we believe that they are Russian.

To the International Community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, Steps must be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect it from the daily killings and siege and increase the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction must 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 were drought out. Therefore, steps under Article 7 of the Rome Statute must be taken and the norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, must be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.

- To renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

• To 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.

Acknowledgment

Our thanks and condolences for the families and local activists who enriched this report majorly.

