

Four Media Activists Killed, and 13 Injured, Toll of April 2017

Including Three Killed by
the Syrian-Russian Alliance

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



Report Contents

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

I. Introduction

Media activism in Syria is continuously deteriorating in light of the lack of attention by many international media organizations to what is happening in Syria and the notable decline in media coverage over the last year compared with previous years.

SNHR publishes a monthly report documenting the violations against media activists who play a prominent role in the civil movement and the armed conflict.

It should be noted that a journalist is a civilian according to the international humanitarian law regardless of his nationality. Any attack deliberately directed against a journalist is considered a war crime. However, when a media activist gets close to action-heavy zones, he is responsible for his own actions where targeting him in such case would be seen as collateral damage. Also, he would lose the right to protection if he was involved in military operations. We believe that media activists must be respected whether they have identification papers as media workers or don't considering the many difficulties they encounter to acquire these papers.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

“Media activism is especially important because it often sheds light on a string of various crimes that are taking place on a daily basis. Therefore, we record the violations perpetrated by conflicting parties in our monthly reports on violations against media activists.”



SNHR emphasizes that serious and quick steps must be taken to save media activism in Syria, and renews its condemnation of all violations against the freedom of media activism regardless of the perpetrators. The freedom of media must be respected and the workers in the media field must be protected and particularly considered. All individuals involved in violations against journalists and media activists must be held accountable. The international community, represented by the Security Council, must act upon its responsibilities in order to protect civilians and media activists in Syria.

II. Methodology

According to SNHR's methodology, a civilian journalist is anyone who plays a notable role in reporting and publishing news. He is not necessarily impartial as a journalist should be.

In case a civilian journalist carried a weapon and was directly engaged in offensive military operations, he is no longer deemed a citizen journalist whereas it is possible that he would be referred to as a civilian journalist again provided he retires completely from military action.

The report might include incidents that we believe do not constitute violations of the international humanitarian law. We include it, however, to record it among the incidents that resulted in casualties even though it was within the boundaries that the international humanitarian law allows for.

This report draws upon SNHR's archive and the investigations conducted by the Network in addition to accounts by victims' families, information from local activists, and analyzing the pictures and videos that we have been receiving and archiving in our records since 2011.

to read more about SNHR [methodology](#) in documenting victims:

In light of the security and logistic difficulties to access all the areas where violations take place, it is worth noting that these statistics and incidents are only the bare minimum of the actual magnitude of crimes and violations that happened.



III. Executive Summary

Violations against media activists during the month of April 2017 are distributed as follows:

A. Acts of killing: SNHR documented the killing of four media activists as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: one media activist
- Russian forces: two media activists
- Other parties: one media activist

B. Injuries: we recorded 13 injuries as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: nine media activists
- Russian forces: three media activists
- Other parties: one media activist

IV. Details

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

- Acts of killing

Samer Mohammad Walid al Sa'our

Friday, April 14, 2017, Samer was killed as he was shot Syrian regime forces in the heart and chest, while he was covering clashes between armed opposition factions and Syrian regime forces on the battlefield of Harasta al Gharbiya city in Damascus suburbs governorate.

[Samer](#), known as Abu Yazan, a photographer for Jaish al Islam, an armed opposition faction, from Douma city in Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1998, has an elementary education degree, single.



We contacted Reda al Dimashqi, via Facebook, a media activist who is a friend of Samer's. Reda confirmed the incident details, and added that six bullets were the cause of Samer's death – five in the chest area and one in the heart.

- Injuries

Tuesday, April 4, 2016, six media activists suffered suffocation as they were on their way to al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city, located in the southern suburbs of Idlib and is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front, to cover the aftermath of a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes that fired a missile loaded with poison gases, which resulted in a horrifying massacre. The six media activists are:



- **Mohammad Hasan al Dgheim**

A reporter for "[Aleppo Today](#)" TV channel, from Jarjanaz town in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1988.

SNHR contacted Mohammad, via Facebook, who told us:

"After I heard about the massacre in Khan Sheikhoun, I went along with my colleague Abd Qentar to cover it. We started from the civil defense center in Khan Sheikhoun, where we interviewed paramedics and civil defense members and took pictures of the cases there. We met with Abdul Qader al Bakri and Anas Diyab and went in a car to the bombing site. We stopped at the site of the first airstrike that hit a house in the middle of the city, and heavily destroyed it as well as the surrounding houses. We then moved to the site of the second airstrike "The Chemical Gas Airstrike" which was in a main street in the city. As soon as we got there, we started taking pictures of the site, and then we smelled a nasty smell that we realized later it was the gas which was still in the air even over an hour and a half passed since the airstrike. We decided to get in the car and leave."

"Abd couldn't drive more than 500 meters away from the bombing site because he started feeling dizzy, so Abdul Qader took over and we headed for a medical point, where they took off our clothes and washed us and gave us first-aid such as oxygen and sedatives. These procedures weren't enough to reduce the effects of inhaling gas on Abd who was transferred to a hospital outside the city."



- **Anas al Diyab**

Works with the civil defense's [media office](#), from Khan Shekhoun city, born in 1997, single.



- Abdul Ra'ouf Mohammad Qentar

A reporter for [Anadolu Agency](#) and Zaman [al Wasl website](#), from Ain Larouz village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1995, a first-year student of the Technical Institute for Media at Aleppo University in the liberated areas. Married.

SNHR contacted Abdul Ra'ouf, via Facebook, who told us:

“On Tuesday, April 4, Syrian regime warplanes carried out airstrikes in al Shamali neighborhood of Khan Sheikhoun city, and used chemical weapons in one of the airstrikes. I headed for the neighborhood to document the aftermath of the airstrike. As I was working, I suffocated from the rampant gas smell which affected my lungs and nervous system. I was taken to al Zera'a Hospital in Idlib city, and then to al Asfar Hospital in al Reyhanli city in Turkey. ”



Media activist Abdul
Ra'ouf Qentar

“I saw many cases that exhibited suffocation, coughing, and heavy breathing. There were many children, women, and men who were foaming. The neighborhood that was bombed is populated by civilians only, and there are no military bases that would justify bombing the neighborhood.”

-Abdul Qader Mohammad al Bakri

A reporter for [Qasyoun Agency](#), from al Taman'a town in the southern suburbs of [Idlib](#), born in 1991, a third-year university student at the faculty of humanitarian science and literature – history department, single.

SNHR contacted Abdul Qader, via Facebook, to inquire about his injury:

“After the chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun city, I went along with three media activists to the site to document the aftermath of the airstrike. I saw many of the children's dead bodies that the civil defense pulled out in addition to women suffocating. The rampant gas smell affected my sight and made me suffocate. I received first-aid at Khan Sheikhoun Hospital, which was bombed after I left, then I was transferred to Talmanas Hospital, and from there to Idlib Hospital, where I stayed until recovery.”



Media activist Abdul
Qader al Bakri



-Ahmad Islam

A photographer, works for Syria Charity, from [al Mash-had](#) neighborhood in Aleppo city, born in 1996.

SNHR contacted Ahmad, via Facebook, who told us:

“I was on my way to cover the airstrikes in Khan Sheikhoun city. When I got to where the missiles exploded, and as I was taking pictures, I suddenly felt that I am suffocating, and I couldn't breathe anymore. I started feeling dizzy and I fainted. My friends took me immediately to the nearest hospital in the area. I don't remember its name. I was resuscitated there. I am still recovering from the injury, as I lost about 60% of my sight, and I am feeling restlessness in my chest, and I am having difficulties breathing, and my stomach hurts.”



- Hussein Abdul Mun'im Kayyal

A reporter for Idlib Meda Center, from Khan Sheikhoun city, born in 1991, has a degree from the literature and humanitarian science – archeology department, married.

SNHR contacted Hussein Kayyal, via Facebook, who told us:

“When I heard that my city was bombed with chemical gas, I went there to cover what happened. I saw many of the area residents injured, as they suffered from suffocation and had difficulties breathing and runny noses. Some of them were foaming. They couldn't move at all. I immediately tried to take some of the injured in my car. While I was driving, I started feeling dizzy because of the smell that was coming out of the injured and their heavy cough. My dizziness made me lost control over the car and I hit a dirt checkpoint. I was taken, along with the other people in my car, to Talmanas Hospital. There, I was immediately injected with atropine. After a while, I felt more rested, and I went back home, but I am still having difficulties breathing.”



Osama Abdul Mun'im al Khalil

Thursday, April 6, 2017, he was [injured](#) by shrapnel from an artillery fired by Syrian regime forces artillery that fell near him as he was covering the clashes between armed opposition factions and Syrian regime forces on the battlefield of al Manshiya neighborhood in Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city as part of “al Mawt Wala al Mathalla” battle.

Osama, a reporter for al Jesr TV Channel, from Ma'raba town in the eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1996, has a high school diploma, single.

SNHR contacted Osama, via Facebook, who told us:

“On Thursday April 6, as I was covering the developments in al Manshiya neighborhood, an artillery shell fell near me, and one of the shrapnel went into my right eye and I sustained bruises all over my body. I was rushed to Ma'raba Makeshift Hospital, where I received the necessary treatment, before I was referred to an eye doctor to continue my treatment.”



Ahmad Ibrahim al Masalma

Monday, April 10, 2017, Ahmad was injured by shrapnel in his [right flank](#) after a mortar shell fired by Syrian regime forces artillery fell near him Manshiya neighborhood in Daraa city, as he was covering the areas that armed opposition factions took control of as part of “al Mawt Wala al Mathalla” battle.

Ahmad, a reporter for Qasyoun Agency, from Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city, born in 1994, has a high school diploma, single.

SNHR contacted the media activist Sara al Hourani, head of Qasyoun Agency office for Daraa and al Quneitra governorates, via Facebook. Sara revealed some details about the injury of her colleague Ahmad:

“After the rebels took over many areas in Daraa al Balad, Ahmad went along with some media activists to take some pictures of the liberated areas. While he was working, a mortar shell fired by the regime fell near him. A shrapnel went into Ahmad's flank, while other shrapnel went into his colleague's back. Ahmad carried his friend to the nearest car, and the two were taken to Nasib Makeshift Hospital on the Syrian-Jordanian borders, where he is still there receiving treatment.”



Udai Ouda

Udai was injured twice this month. [The First time](#) was on Wednesday, April 12, 2017. He was injured in his left thigh by shrapnel from a tank shell fired by the Syrian regime as he was covering the clashes between armed opposition factions and Syrian regime forces on the battlefield of al Qaboun neighborhood groves in eastern Damascus governorate. [The second](#) injury was on Saturday, April 29, 2017, which was caused by shrapnel from a tank shell by Syrian regime forces that hit him in his left foot as he was covering clashes on the same battlefield.

Udai, a reporter and photographer for Qasyoun Agency and al Qaboun Neighborhood Media Office, from al Qaboun neighborhood in al Damascus city, born in 1994, has an intermediate education certificate, single.

SNHR contacted Udai, via Facebook, after his first injury:

“Around 7:00 PM on Wednesday, and as I was covering the clashes between the rebels and the Syrian regime on the battlefield of al Qaboun neighborhood groves, a tank shell fell near me, and the shrapnel went into my left foot. I was rushed to the makeshift hospital in al Qaboun neighborhood, where they got the shrapnel out from my foot. In the same incident, a rebel was injured too, and he was treated with me as well.”



Media activist Udai Ouda

B. Violations by Russian forces

- Acts of killing

Mus'ab Abdul Rahim Ahmad Urabi

Wednesday, April 26, 2017, Mus'ab died of a fatal injury in [the abdomen](#) after fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired a missile that fell near him, as he was covering a vaccination campaign in al Janoudiya town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The town is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front. [Mosad](#), head of the Qatari Crescent's [media office](#) in Syria, and head of Tube Rasd Network's office in Syria, from al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1983, has an intermediate education certificate, married and has a son and a daughter.



Media activist Mus'ab Ahmad Urabi



SNHR contacted Abdul Rahman Abdullah, a relative of Mus'ab's, via Facebook. Abdul Rahman told us:

“As Mus'ab was covering the vaccination campaign, which is a cooperation between the Support Coordination Unit, the Qatari Crescent, and the Vaccination in al Janoudiya town in the suburbs of Idlib, Russian warplanes attacked the town with a number of missiles. One of the missiles fell near the car Mus'ab was inside. Mosad was injured by shrapnel in his abdomen and pelvis, and other shrapnel in his left hand which was disfigured because of the injury. Mus'ab needed a specialist to treat him, and he was transferred to a hospital in Idlib suburbs. However, Mus'ab died before getting there. There was another doctor who was injured in the bombing, but he survived thanks to God.”

Ahmad Nayef al Hussein

Saturday, April 29, 2017, [Ahmad](#) was killed in a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian that fired missiles at center 107, which is affiliated to the civil defense center, in Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate. The city is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Ahmad, known as Barada, a photographer for the civil defense, from al Zakat village in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1990, has a degree from the education faculty, single.



- Injuries

Hadi Emad al Din Kharrat

Tuesday, April 4, 2017, he sustained a fracture in his [left foot](#) as he was helping aiding the wounded who were being pulled out from the rubbles in the aftermath of a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian in al Sena'a neighborhood in Jesr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Hadi, a photographer for the media office of the civil defense center in Jesr al Shoghour city, from Jesr al Shoghour city, born in 1995, a first-year university student at the faculty of economics – business management department. Married and a father of one.



SNHR contacted Hadi, via Facebook, who told us about the details of his injury:

“On the evening of Tuesday, April 4, after a bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes, I went to the site along with the civil defense to film the aftermath of the bombardment there. While I was doing my job, I heard someone screaming so I rushed to save him, but my foot twisted because of the rubbles. I carried on with my work for an hour and a half, as I felt a very severe pain in my foot until I lost the ability to walk from the pain. My civil defense colleagues took me immediately to the hospital, where they diagnosed two fractures in my left foot, and they had a cast put on it.”



Media activist Hadi Kharrat

Ahmad Salim al Khannous

Tuesday, April 18, 2017, Ahmad was wounded in his head and sustained bruises all over his body after fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian carried out a double airstrike in Ma'aret Harma village in the southern suburbs of [Idlib governorate](#), as he was helping the wounded from the first airstrike. The village is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

[Ahmad](#), an independent media activist, from Ma'aret Harma village, born in 1989, has a high school diploma, single.

SNHR contacted Ahmad, via Facebook, to ask him about his injury:

“On Tuesday, April 18, my village was bombed by Russian warplanes. I went to the targeted side, where the destruction was huge. I immediately started helping with aiding the wounded. As we were working, the warplanes bombed the area again, which wounded me above my right eye, and gave me various wounds all over my body. I was rushed to the nearest medical point in the village, where they stitched my forehead wound, and put bandage on the rest of my wounds. The double airstrike resulted in a massacre, where 10 people from the same family were killed including nine children. The scene was horrifying.”



Media activist
Ahmad al Khannous



Maher Joum'a Salmawi

Wednesday, April 26, 2017, Maher sustained wounds and bruises in his feet in a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian that fired a missile that fell near him, as he was covering a previous bombing by the same warplanes in al Sahaqiya village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The village is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Maher, a photographer for the civil defense – al Ya'qoubiya center, from al Janoudiya town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1989, has a degree in media, married. We contacted Maher, via WhatsApp, who told us:

“On Wednesday, April 26, Russian warplanes bombed al Sahaqiya village. I went there with the civil defense to cover the aftermath of the bombing. As I was there, the warplanes came back and bombed the area for a second time. The missile fell in an area close to me, which caused severe wounds in my right foot and bruises in my left foot. I was rushed to the nearest medical point. In the bombing, a civil defense colleague of mine was injured as well as many civilians. Also, many houses were damaged.”



Media activist
Maher Salmawi

C. Other parties

- Acts of killing

Gharib Hamoush Rashou

Thursday, April 20, 2017, a landmine killed Gharib near [Um al Tanak village](#) in northwestern al Raqqa governorate. As of this writing, we couldn't identify the group that planted the landmine.

Gharib, a photographer for the Kurdish Self-Management forces, from Senkaya village in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1992, has a degree from the Technical Agricultural Institute in Aleppo University.



Media activist
Gharib Rashou



- Injuries

Majed Hussein al Umari

Saturday, April 15, 2017, [Majed](#) sustained wounds in his feet, right hand, and neck after a car bomb detonated near him in al Rashideen neighborhood in [western Aleppo city](#), as he was covering the evacuation of the besieged residents of Kafrayya and al Fou'a towns in the Four Cities Agreement that was struck between Fateh al Sham Front and the Islamic Movement Ahrar al Sham, on one side, and the Iranian militias, on the other side. We couldn't identify the group behind the bombing as of this writing. The neighborhood is under the control of armed opposition factions.

Majed, a reporter for Step News Agency, from Masqan village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1976, has a degree from the faculty of literature – Arabic department in Aleppo University. Married and has four kids.

We contacted Majed, via Facebook, who told us:

“As I was in al Rashideen area covering the evacuation of civilians of Kafrayya and al Fou'a cities, we were told that some ambulances are coming from the regime's areas with some injured. As we got to an advanced area in the neighborhood, some cars went in. One of the cars started distributing bags of potato on the children under the supervision of Jaish al Fateh. After that, the car got to the middle of the area to continue. About 20 minutes later, we heard a big explosion that tossed me away, and I was heavily bleeding. Everyone was in panic and dead bodies were everywhere. Many of the victims were from Jaish al Fateh and the residents and armed men of Kafrayya and al Fou'a. Also, fires erupted in a large number of buses and ambulances.”

“I was rushed to Ma'rat Misreen Hospital in Idlib suburbs, where I underwent a surgery in one of my left knee veins, and the wounds of my feet, right hand, and neck were treated.”



V. Recommendations

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Condemn the targeting of media activists in Syria and sheds light on their sacrifice and suffering.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Conduct investigations that focuses on the targeting of media activists given their vital role in recording incidents in Syria.

The Security Council

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

International and Arabic media institutions

Advocate 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 with respect to the protection of civilians and especially media activists and their equipment.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Out most heartfelt condolences go out for the victims' families and our thank for the families and friends of media activists who contributed effective





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

