

Eight Medical and Civil Defense Personnel Killed and Six Attacks on their Vital Facilities in May 2017

A Notable Decrease in Killing and Destruction Rates in Light of the De-Escalation Agreement



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 and Methodology

SNHR's high-level methodology for documentation relies on survivors and families' direct accounts in addition to the process of verifying and analyzing pictures, videos, and some medical records. However, 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.

To read more about SNHR [methodology](#) for documenting victims, please see the following URL.

The consistent bombing and targeting of medical facilities and civil defense centers by Syrian regime forces since 2011, and the killing and arrest of medics and civil defense personnel at the hands of different conflict parties, especially Syrian regime forces, indicates a systematic policy that only aims to shed more blood and deepen the suffering of the injured – civilians and armed.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

"The Russian 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 considering the chaotic, 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."



The fourth round of negotiations was held in Astana city, Kazakhstan's capital, on 3 and 4 of May 2017. Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives attended as the sponsoring states of Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. The three states agreed on establishing four de-escalation zones, wherein the agreement is to commence on May 6, 2017. The agreement outlined four major de-escalation areas – Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and al Quneitra governorates in the southern parts of Syria. It was provided that an expert committee would accurately assign the borders of said zones at a later date. The agreement provided for a cessation of combat operations, passage of humanitarian aids, and for IDPs to go back to their areas. Since the agreement went into effect, these areas saw a relatively noticeable and good decrease in killing rates compared with the previous months since March 2011.

Nonetheless, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the Russian, Turkish, and Iranian sponsors- won't see are still going on as nothing is changed.

SNHR recorded in May an unprecedented drop in the rate of the Syrian-Russian alliance's violation against medical and civil defense personnel and their respective facilities since the start of the Russian intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015.

This report only represents the bare minimum, which we were able to document, of the actual magnitude and severity of the violations that occurred. Additionally, the report doesn't cover the social, economic, and psychological ramifications.



II. Executive Summary

SNHR documented in the month of May 2017 the following main violations against medical and civil defense personnel and their respective facilities:

A. Acts of killing

We documented the killing of eight medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel

- Extremist Islamic groups

ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): killed two civil defense personnel

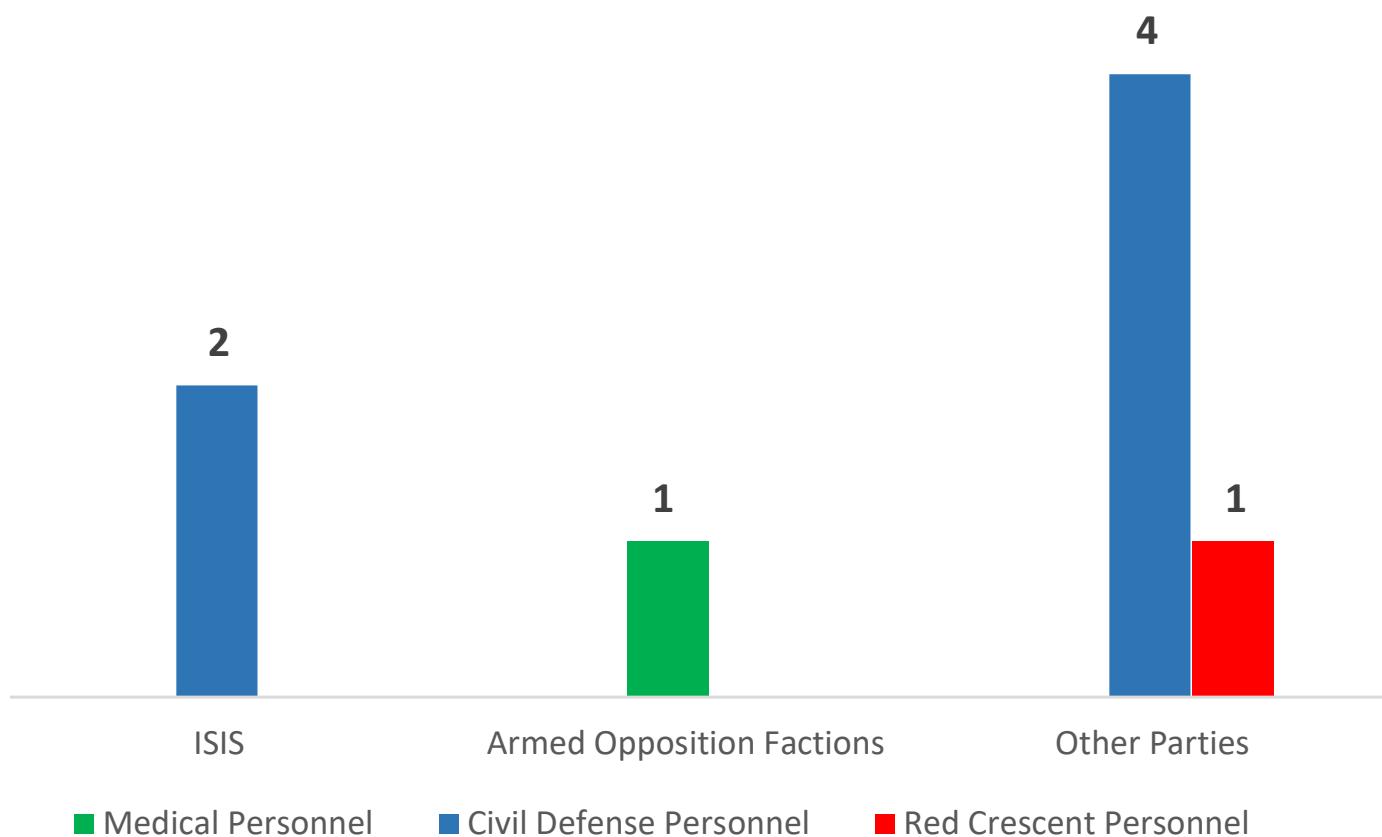
- Armed opposition factions: killed one medical personnel

- Other parties: killed five civil defense and Red Crescent personnel as follows:

- Four civil defense personnel

- One Red Crescent personnel

Medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel killed in the month of May are distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

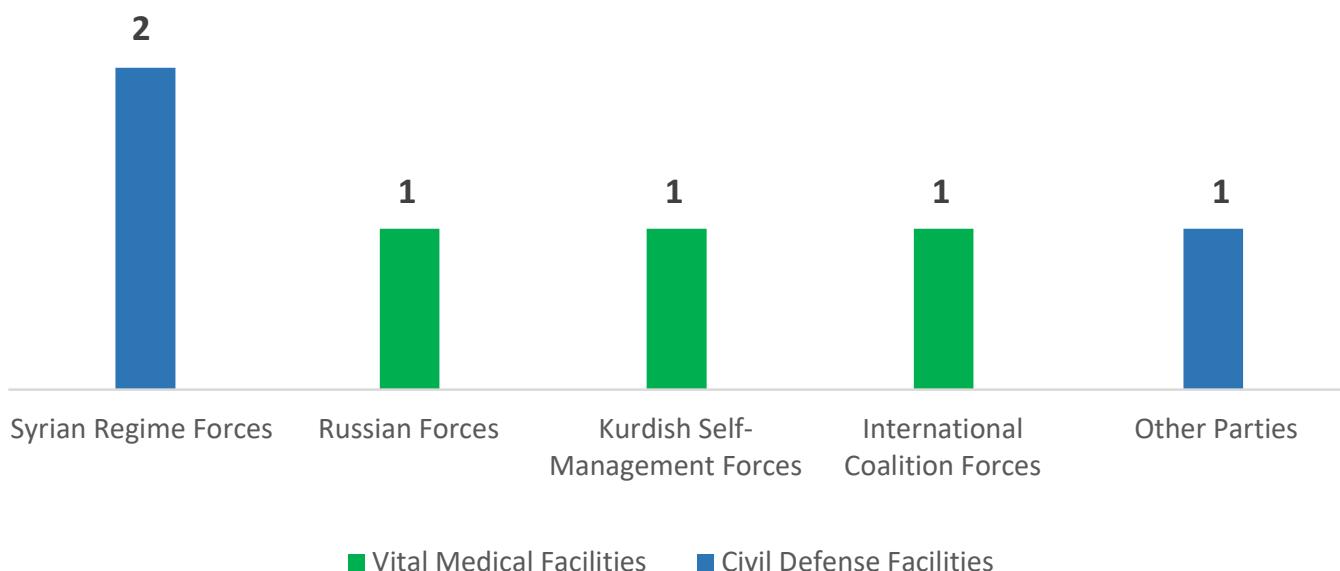


B. Targeting of vital medical and civil defense facilities

SNHR documented six incidents of attack on vital medical and civil defense facilities

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): two incidents of attack on civil defense facilities
- Russian forces: one incident of attack on vital medical facilities
- Self-Management forces (Primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): one incident of attack on vital medical facilities
- International coalition forces: one incident of attack on vital medical facilities
- Other parties: one incident of attack on civil defense facilities

Attacks on vital medical and civil defense facilities are distributed as follows



III. Details

First: Acts of killing

A. Extremist Islamic groups

- ISIS

Walid Abdul Ghani Britwai, a civil defense member in [al Bab city](#), eastern suburbs of Aleppo, from al Bab city, born in 1987, has a high school diploma, married and a father of a boy. He was killed on Wednesday, May 10, 2017, by a landmine planted by ISIS before they retreated from al Bab city.



Walid Britawi

Fahd Mahmoud Swied, [a civil defense member](#) in al Bab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, from Aleppo governorate, born in 1987, married and a father of five. He died on Monday, May 15, 2017, of wounds caused on Wednesday, May 10, 2017 by a landmine planted by ISIS before they retreated from al Bab city.



Fahd Swied

B. Armed opposition factions

Mohammad al Husari, known as Abu Yaser, a paramedic who works for Jaish al Islam -an armed opposition faction- from al Hejjariya neighborhood in Douma city -in Eastern Ghouta-, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. He was killed on Thursday, May 4, 2017 as he was shot while he was evacuating the wounded of the infighting between Jaish al Islam, on one side, and Failaq al Rahman and Hay'et Tahrir al Sham, on the other side, in eastern Ghouta. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the group that was responsible for his death.



Mohammad al Husari



C. Other parties

Mohammad Jamal Thafer al Wardi, a Red Crescent volunteer, from al Qosour neighborhood in northwestern Deir Ez-Zour city, 27-year-old. He was killed on Wednesday, April 5, 2017, by a parachute -carrying relief aids- that was dropped in the neighborhoods besieged by ISIS in Deir Ez-Zour city. The parachute was dropped by a cargo aircraft near al Lewa' 137 on Damascus-Deir Ez-Zour highway in southern Deir Ez-Zour city. On Wednesday, May 3, 2017, we verified the incident by contacting the area activists. As of this writing, we couldn't identify the party to which the aircraft belongs.



Mohammad Jamal al Wardi

Fadi Irsan al Tarshan al Hariri, head of center 12, affiliated to the civil defense, in [Bosr al Harir](#) city in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, from Bosr al Harir city, born in 1986, has a degree in applied chemistry, married and a father of five. On Tuesday, May 2, 2017, he was killed in an IED explosion that was planted near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense on Bosr al Harir-Nahta road in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, as its crew were heading to aid the victims of another IED explosion. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the party that planted the IED.



Fadi al Hariri

Nasr Fadel al Alyan al Harir, a civil defense member, from Bosr al Harir city in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1989, has an intermediate education certificate, married and a father of three. He was killed on Tuesday, May 2, 2017, in an IED explosion that was planted near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense on Bosr al Harir-Nahta road in northeastern suburbs of [Daraa governorate](#), as its crew were heading to aid the victims of another IED explosion. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the party that planted the IED.



Nasr al Hariri



Khalil Ibrahim al Jarab'a al Hariri, a civil defense member, from Bosr al Harir city in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1979, has an intermediate education certificate, married and a father of four. He was killed on Tuesday, May 2, 2017, in an IED [explosion](#) that was planted near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense on Bosr al Harir-Nahta road in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, as its crew were heading to aid the victims of another IED explosion. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the party that planted the IED.



Khalil al Hariri

Abdullah Munir al Alyan al Hariri, a civil defense member, from Bosr al Harir city in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1991, married and a father of a girl. He was killed on Tuesday, May 2, 2017, in an IED explosion that was planted near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense on Bosr al Harir-Nahta road in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, as its crew was heading to aid the victims of another IED explosion. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the party that planted the IED.



Abdullah al Hariri

Second: Targeting of vital medical and civil defense facilities

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

- Civil defense facilities

Saturday, May 6, 2017, Syrian regime forces artillery fired a shell that landed near a vehicle belonging to the unexploded munition team, which works for the civil defense in [al Shayyah area](#) in southern Daraa city. The shelling wounded three civil defense members. Additionally, the vehicle was moderately damaged. al Shayyah area is under the control of armed opposition factions.



Thursday, May 11, 2017, around 22:50, Syrian regime forces rocket launchers, stationing in Jabal al Akrad, northeastern suburbs of Latakia governorate, fired a number of rockets that landed near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense in [Bdama town](#), western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The ambulance external structure was moderately damaged. The town is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.



Damages resulting from a number of rockets landing near an ambulance in Bdama town, Idlib after they were fired by Syrian regime rocket launchers - May 11, 2017

B. Russian forces

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities

Monday, May 1, 2017, around 11:00, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired a number of [missiles](#) at a [residential building](#) that is occupied by a medical recovery point affiliated to [Irbeen Surgical Hospital](#) (The medical point is in the basement) in Hamouriya town in Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, which resulted in casualties. Additionally, the [medical point](#) building and the [operation room](#) were heavily destroyed, and the equipment were [heavily damaged](#). As a result, the medical point was rendered out of commission. It should be noted that a "medical recovery point" is a [medical center](#) for men where they go for recovery and follow-up after a surgery. The center also includes orthopedic and neural operation rooms. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.





Damages resulting from a bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian on a medical point affiliated to Irbeen Hospital in Hamouriya town, Damascus suburbs – May 1, 2017

C. Self-Management forces (Primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities

Sunday, May 28, 2017, the Kurdish-majority Syrian Democratic Forces artillery fired a number of shells at al Resala Hospital in Tal Abyad street in the middle of al Raqqa city. The hospital building was slightly damaged. al Raqqa city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

D. International coalition forces

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities

Tuesday, May 9, 2017, fixed-wing international coalition forces warplanes fired a number of missiles at a makeshift hospital in al Mansoura town in western suburbs of al Raqqa. The hospital building was heavily destroyed. As a result, the hospital was rendered out of commission. It is worth noting that this hospital is for treating wounded ISIS fighters. The town was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



E. Other parties

- Civil defense facilities

Tuesday, May 2, 2017, an IED exploded near [an ambulance](#) belonging to the civil defense on Bosr al Harir-Nahta road in northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, as its crew were heading to aid the victims of another IED explosion, which resulted in the killing of four civil defense personnel. Additionally, the ambulance was [heavily destroyed](#), and was rendered out of commission. As of this writing, we have not been able to identify the group who planted the IED. Bosr al Harir-Nahta road was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



The destruction that resulted from an IED explosion of an unknown source near an ambulance on Bosr al Harir-Nahta road, Daraa – May 2, 2017



IV. Conclusions and Recommendation

Legal conclusions

- 1- 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 halted. Also, these incidents are violations of Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.
- 2- 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, Self-Management forces, international coalition forces, armed opposition factions, and other parties (which includes parties that we weren't able to identify as well as Turkish, Lebanese, and Jordanian forces) have committed acts that amount to war crimes through the crime of extrajudicial killing or targeting vital civilian facilities.
- 3- 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.
- 4- 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

The Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps as it has been more than two years since Resolution 2139 was adopted and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombardment operations have been made. All the conflict parties must 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 must be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in committing war crimes have been proven.
- 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 destroyed, stolen, and ruined.
- Expand the sanctions to include the Syrian and Iranian regimes and all of their pillars who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.



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 them from the daily killings and siege and enhance 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.
- 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 utilizing the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

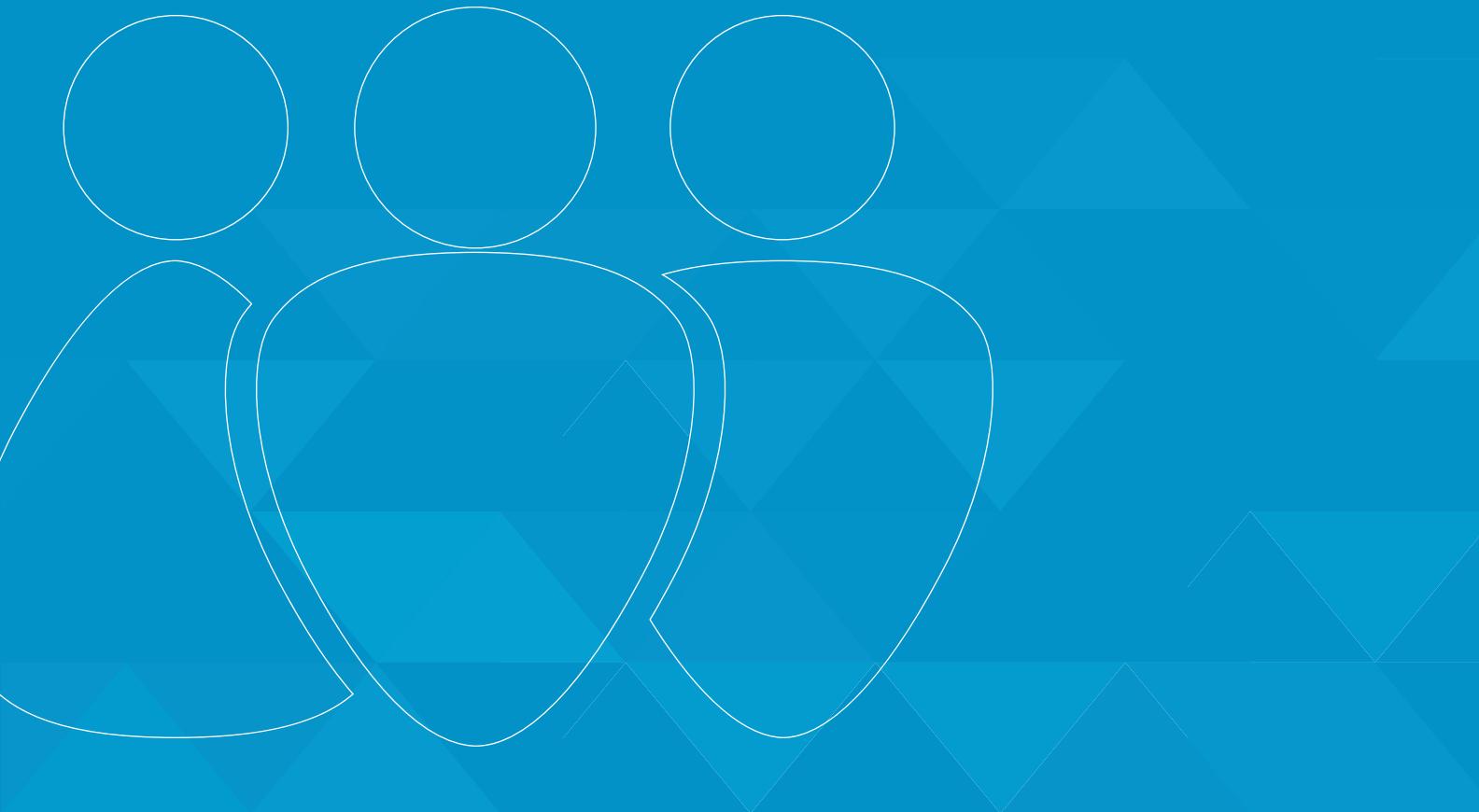
Medical organizations around the world

There is a severe shortage in medical manpower in Syria because of the ceaseless killing of medical personnel. 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 go to the victims' families and friends and to the local activists who contributed majorly to this report.





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