



Eastern Neighborhoods of Aleppo are being Bombed and Besieged No less than 300,000 Besieged People in the City

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I. Introduction

The eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo city (Salah Al-Din neighborhood, Al-Mash-had neighborhood, Al-Sha'ar, Tareaq Al-Bab, Al-Khaldiya, Masaken Hananou....) have been under the control of armed opposition factions since the end of 2012. These neighborhoods are connected with the northern and western suburbs of Aleppo city through Castillo Road. Government forces (Army, security, and loyal Shiite foreign militias) have sought to take control of Castillo Road after it managed to reach the Road with the support of the Russian military intervention that begun on 30 September 2015.

Syrian Democratic Forces (primarily the Democratic Union Party, a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) controls Al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood which is near Castillo Road. Syrian Democratic Forces also targets cars and pedestrians on Castillo Road which resulted in the death of eight civilians; three were killed by snipers and five were killed by artillery shells, between September 2015 and May 2016 before government forces advanced to reach Castillo Road.

At the end of May 2016, government forces seized military points near Castillo Road. However, it wasn't able to take control completely. Consequently, Castillo Road, which is the only point of access for the residents of Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods to the northern and western suburbs, has become a target for shells, missiles, and government and Russian airstrikes.

On 7 July 2016, government forces, with the support of local and foreign militias, advanced to Mazare' Al-Mallah





area which directly overlooks onto Castillo Road. On 10 July 2016, government forces started targeting any vehicle that passes through the road and the siege of no less than 300,000 people living in the eastern neighborhoods of the city has become worse. On the other side, Syrian Democratic Forces takes part in the siege on these neighborhoods by controlling Al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods and refusing to facilitate the passage of aids or civilians.

This report sheds light on the violations of the international humanitarian law, mainly the siege and bombing of the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo, between 10 July 2016 and 23 July 2016 and what that means for hundreds of thousands of civilians. The report methodology draws upon SNHR's archive which has been cumulatively built over the course of the aforementioned period of time through daily monitoring and documenting. All statistics included are recorded by name, picture, place and time of death, and other details. In light of the extraordinary difficulties, the inability to access the area, and our direct reliance on accounts of survivors and eyewitnesses, the numbers in this report are only the bare minimum of the actual numbers which are certainly greatly higher.

II. Executive Summary

This report covers the period of time from 10 July 2016 until 23 July 2016 in which we documented several types of violations against civilians that were perpetrated by government forces and Russian forces.

A. Siege: Government forces are responsible for the siege of Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods for the most part. Additionally, Syrian Democratic Forces tightens the siege by not allowing the passage of aids or civilians via Al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood.

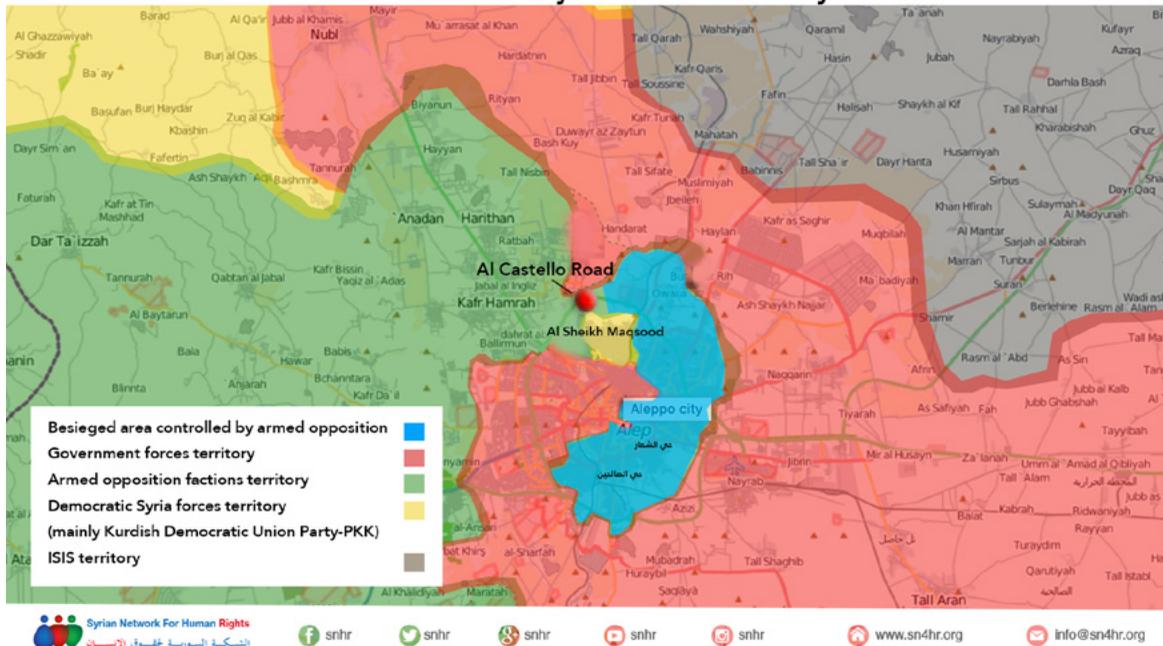
B. Extrajudicial killing: SNHR documented the killing of 99 civilians including 25 children and 16 women which are distributed by the influential parties as follows:

- Government forces: killed 71 civilians including 18 children and 11 women. Among the 71 civilians were 14 civilians, including two children, who were killed as they were trying to pass through Castillo Road.
- Russian Forces: killed 28 civilians including seven children and five women.





Map shows Aleppo eastern neighbourhoods sieged by government forces and Democratic Syria forces since 10 July 2016



III. Details

A. Siege

Since 10 July 2016, the siege of Aleppo’s eastern neighborhoods by government forces has tightened as government forces missiles and snipers started targeting Castillo Road. Over the course of the 14 days since the beginning of the siege, we recorded a significant rise in the prices of food where vegetables and fruits are gradually running out of markets as well as bakeries’ stockpiles of flour and fuel, which is necessary for the bakeries to operate. Also, there has been a blatant deterioration with regard to the medical situation as hundreds of critical medical cases need to be transferred to specialized hospitals outside the city in addition to the targeting of hospitals and medical points by government forces and Russian forces.

Syrian Democratic Forces, who controls Al-Sheikh Maqsood neighborhood, bans the passage of civilians or food to the eastern neighborhoods of the city which makes it a partner in worsening the siege along with government forces.

SNHR contacted Mr. Ibrahim, a member of the civil defense team, who provided us with his account on the siege of Aleppo neighborhoods and its consequences on rescue and aid operations:





“We have been besieged for about 15 days. No food or fruits are entering the besieged neighborhoods. Flour is about to run out and people are standing for hours in front of bakeries to obtain a small number of loaves of bread.”

“Despite the siege, government and Russian forces haven’t stopped targeting the besieged neighborhoods and a great number of civilians have fallen. The civil defense’s fuel reserve is about to run out and when that happens, all of our vehicles are going to stop and we won’t be able to operate.”

Mahmoud Al-Masri is a resident of Aleppo city, he provided his insight on the humanitarian situation in the besieged neighborhoods of Aleppo city:

“On 9 or 10 July, government force managed to oversight Castillo Road completely, all vehicles and convoys on the Road are now targets for government forces. A number of civilians tried to flee but they were killed as they were targeted on the Road. We are still not able to pull the dead bodies that are still lying on the Road.”

“The situation in the city is about to deteriorate. The markets are lacking egg, sugar, and fruits except for molokhia which is 300 Syrian Pounds for one kilogram and eggplants which is 350 Syrian Pounds for one kilogram. Molokhia and Eggplants are harvested in some groves which are located inside the neighborhoods and that is why they are available. Flour is extremely scarce and there isn’t also enough fuel which also contributes to the rise of bread prices as one “Rabta” (a pack of loaves of bread) costs 350 Syrian pounds while 400 grams of children’s milk (milk for children who are younger than one-year-old) costs more than 5\$.

B. Extrajudicial killing

- Government forces

Government forces continues to carry out attacks using barrel bombs, missiles, and artillery shells on Aleppo’s besieged neighborhoods in addition to targeting any car or bus that passes through Castillo Road.

We recorded the killing of 113 civilians including 27 children and 19 women. Among the 114 civilians were 14 civilians, including two children, who were killed as they tried to flee through Castillo Road.





On Tuesday 12 July 2016, government forces, stationed at Al-Nairab military air-base, targeted with heavy artillery shells the southern parts of Al-Myassar neighborhood, controlled by armed opposition factions, to kill one civilian.

On Saturday 16 July 2016, government forces warplanes targeted with missiles Bab Al-Nasr neighborhood, which is under the control of armed opposition factions, and the residential homes in Al-Almaji square. As a result, 12 individuals were killed including four women and five children. Additionally, others were wounded.

On Thursday 21 July 2016, government forces helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on the residential homes that are located near the square of Al-Mash-had neighborhood, which is under the control of armed opposition factions, resulting in the death of eight individuals. Additionally, 12 others were wounded.

- Russian Forces

We recorded the killing of 59 civilians including 18 children and seven women in attacks that were allegedly carried out by Russian forces on the besieged neighborhoods of Aleppo city during the period of time covered in the report.

On Saturday 16 July 2016, alleged warplanes targeted Al-Masaken area in Al-Firdous neighborhood which is under the control of armed opposition factions. As a result, 13 individuals, including three children and three women, were killed. Additionally, others were wounded.

II. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Government forces have perpetrated serious violations of human rights and war crimes that manifested in the form of killing and targeting of civilians. Aerial bombardment has led to the death of great numbers of civilian victims and caused a state of panic among civilians.
- All of the forces mentioned in the report have violated the rules of the international humanitarian law through indiscriminate and random bombardment that resulted in the death of a number of civilians which constitutes war crimes.
- In addition to the crime of extrajudicial killing, there is also the crime of besieging about 300,000 civilians primarily by government forces and secondly Syrian Democratic Forces.
- The violations of human rights and the international humanitarian law give an explicit example on the severity of the war crimes and put the responsibility on the international community to end it as soon as possible.





Recommendations:

- All parties must insure the effective protection of civilians, distinguish between civil and military targets, and refrain from carrying out any indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must respect the civilians' right to acquire indispensable life necessities such as home, food, water, and medical care and allow the passage of humanitarian aids without any obstructions.
- The Security Council must take steps to establish a solution that would instill peace and security in Syria in a way that fulfills the aspirations of the Syrian people in and democracy.
- SNHR deeply fears for the lives of about 300,000 civilians who are besieged in the city of Aleppo. Most of those civilians are children and women and the Syria Support Group must aid them immediately.

Acknowledgment:

Out most sincere thanks to the residents and local activists whose accounts contributed majorly to the investigation process.

