

No less than 15 Massacres in Syria in July 2018

Including Seven Massacres by
Syrian Regime Forces

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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 and Methodology

Since the popular uprising for freedom started in Syria in March 2011, SNHR has taken it upon itself to record a wide range of violations that are being perpetrated daily against the Syrian people, such as killing, enforced-disappearance, arbitrary arrest, destruction, indiscriminate bombardment, and torture as SNHR shed light on the most notable violations it recorded that were committed by the parties to the conflict in Syria in hundreds of reports. The Syrian regime, and its militias, were the only perpetrator of violations at the start of the popular uprising, and they remain the main perpetrator, as the Syrian regime is responsible for the majority of violations. Subsequently, other parties emerged gradually such as the armed opposition, extremist Islamic groups, Democratic Union Party forces, international coalition forces, and Russian forces.

The first two years of the popular uprising saw the largest portion of ethnic and sectarian cleansing massacres, where the Syrian regime and its militias were responsible for the majority of these massacres. In mid-2013, Syrian regime forces started relying heavily on warplanes and they were also used later by international coalition forces and Russian forces. The wide use of aerial bombardment doubled the numbers of victims and caused huge destruction to the infrastructure, as one or two new massacres at least are recorded almost every day.

The Syrian regime used improvised weapons, such as barrel bombs, to bomb the areas that are out of its control while Russian forces used more deadly weapons, relying more on bunker-buster missiles, incendiary ammunitions, and cluster munitions.



Also, we have recorded in our database tens of massacres that were perpetrated by extremist Islamic groups and factions from the armed opposition. In addition, we've monitored massacres by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which are backed by the international coalition forces' air force, where we have recorded a significant rise in the rate of massacres perpetrated by the coalition (international coalition - SDF) since the end of 2016.

Methodology

This report records the massacres perpetrated by the parties to the conflict in Syria in July that SNHR team was able to document. This report also sheds light on the most notable massacres. We have the details of the complete incidents stored in SNHR's database. The term "massacre" refers to any attack that resulted in the killing of five peaceful individuals or more in the same attack.

This report draws upon the ongoing monitoring of news and development by SNHR team, and on an extensive network of relations with tens of various sources that have been built over the course of our work. When we receive information, or hear some news about a violation via the internet or media outlets, we work on following on this news and try to verify and collect evidences and data. In some cases, the researcher is able to visit the incident location at the soonest. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the limited human and material resources. Therefore, the possibility to access evidences vary from one case to another, and, hence, the degree of its classification. Usually, what we do, at SNHR, in such cases is relying on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, where we try to access those directly, and, to a second degree, who saw or filmed the violation.

This report contains a number of attacks that were carried out by an air force. However, we haven't been able to accurately assign responsibility in these attacks, Syrian regime forces or Russian forces. Therefore, we've assigned responsibility to Syrian regime/Russian forces in those attacks.

This report also contains a number of massacres that were the result of bombings but we haven't been able to accurately identify the parties responsible for them on account of the considerable difficulties in identifying the responsible groups in such bombings.

All of the attacks included in this report have targeted civilian areas. We didn't identify any military presence or armories during the attacks or even before it. Additionally, the forces that attacked civilians didn't put out a warning prior to their attacks as the international humanitarian law requires.



SNHR has analyzed videos and pictures that were posted online, or were sent by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media. Some of the videos showed victims of attacks in which missiles, barrel bombs, and artillery shells were used, while most victims were children and women. Other pictures showed attacks that involved gunshots and bombings that we couldn't identify their perpetrators. We have copies of all the pictures and videos included in this report in a secret online database and backup copies on hard drives. We always make sure to store this data with its respective source. Nonetheless, we can't claim that we have documented all cases in light of the ban and pursuit by Syrian regime forces as well as other armed groups.

Please see SNHR methodology for [documenting victims](#).

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

II. July Outline

On June 15, Russian-Syrian alliance forces launched a vicious offensive in Daraa governorate that lasted throughout July. The offensive was later expanded to include all of the areas that are not under Syrian regime forces' control in south Syria which saw the use of all kinds of weapons and ended with the Syrian regime regaining control and forcibly displacing those areas' residents as displacement waves started on July 15. We were able to document seven massacres by Russian-Syrian alliance forces in July, all of which were in south Syria.

In addition, July 25 saw an operation by ISIS that snuck to Suwyada city and a number of villages in its suburbs and perpetrated massacres before withdrawing. We have documented five massacres, as of this writing, and we will release a detailed report on this incident once we finish our investigations.

III. Executive Summary

A. Toll of massacres since the start of 2018

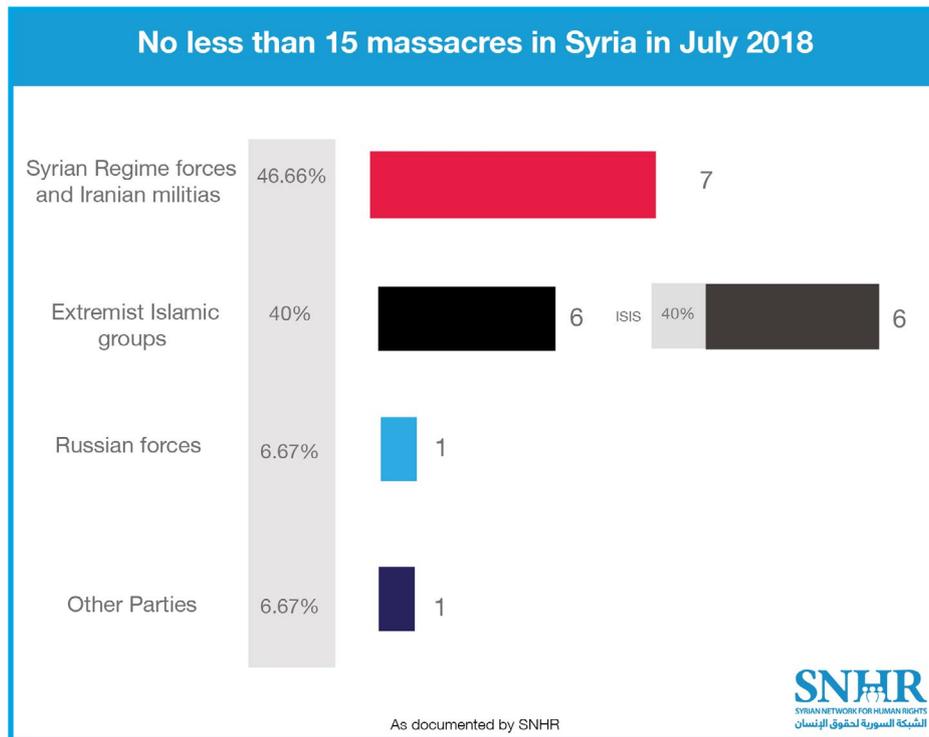
SNHR has documented 201 massacres at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2018 and August of the same year. Massacres are distributed by month as follows:





B. Massacres in July

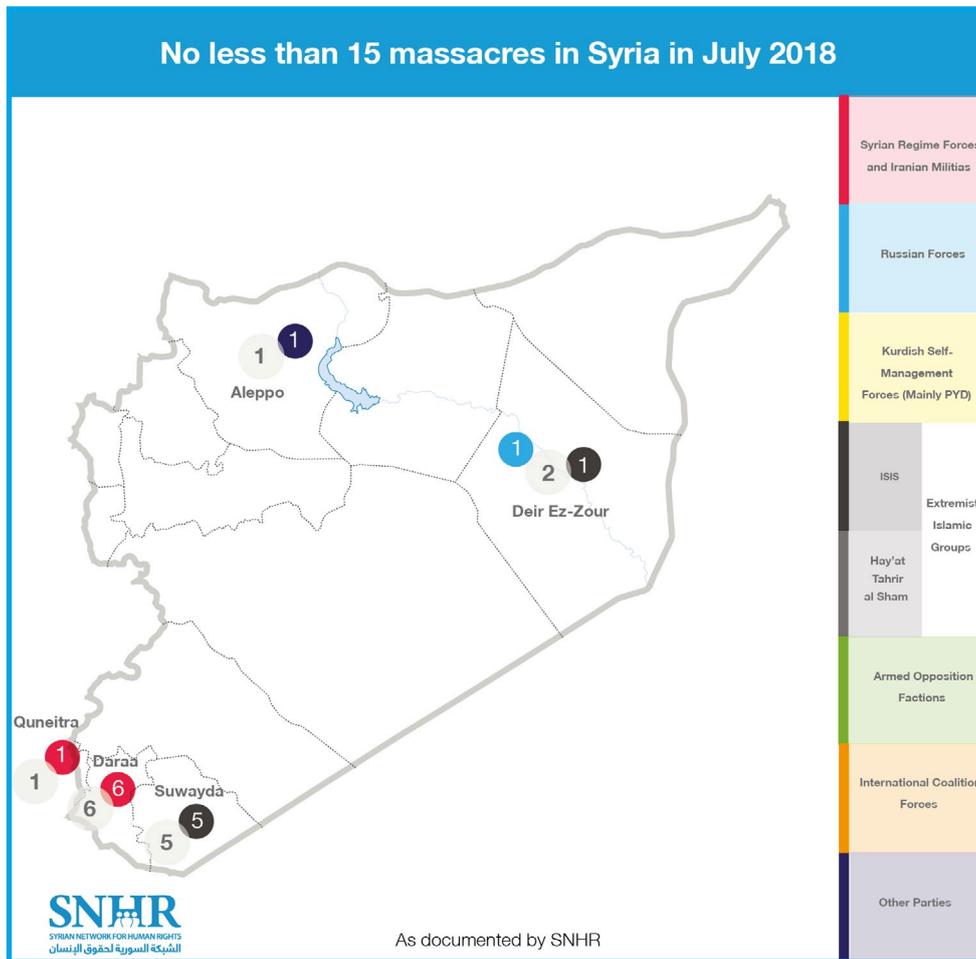
SNHR has documented no less than 15 massacres in July, distributed as follows:



- A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 7
- B. Russian forces: 1
- C Extremist Islamic groups
 - ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): 6
- D. Other parties: 1



The following map shows the distribution of July's massacres across Syrian governorates by the parties to the conflict



The massacres that were carried out by Syrian regime forces in July were distributed by area of control as follows:

- 4 massacres in areas under the control of factions from the armed opposition
- 3 massacres in areas under the control of ISIS

According to the victim documentation team at SNHR, the massacres documented this month have resulted in the killing of 219 individuals, including 28 children and 30 women (adult female). This means that 31% of all victims were women and children, which is a considerably high percentage, and an indication that civilian residents were targeted in most of these massacres.



Death toll of these massacres is distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 52 civilians, including 19 children and 14 women.

B. Russian forces: 6 civilians, including 5 children.

C Extremist Islamic groups

- ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): 155 individuals, including 13 children and 16 women.

D. Other parties: 6 civilians, including 1 child

IV. Details of the Most Notable Massacres in July

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

Daraa governorate

Thursday morning, July 5, 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 [Seyda](#) town, eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, which resulted in the killing of [six civilians](#), who were mostly from the [same family \(four children and two women\)](#). The town 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.



Children victims who were killed in a massacre by Syrian regime/Russian forces in Seyda town, Daraa – July 5, 2018



Tuesday, July 17, 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 helicopters and a shelling by Syrian regime forces rocket launchers that targeted [Nawa](#) city, northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. The attack resulted in the killing of 12 civilians, as we have been able to document as of this writing, including one child and three women. 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, July 29, 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 IDPs gatherings in [Kwayya](#) village, [Wadi Hawd al Yarmouk area](#), western suburbs of Daraa governorate, which resulted in the killing of six civilians, who were mostly from the same family, including two female children and three women. The village is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this writing, while it was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



Victims killed in a massacre by Syrian regime/Russian forces in Kwayya village, Daraa – July 29, 2018



Quneitra governorate

Tuesday, July 17, 2018, Syrian regime forces [helicopters dropped](#) a number of [barrel bombs](#) near [a school housing](#) IDPs from al Harra city, northwestern suburbs of [Daraa governorate](#). The attack, on [Ein al Tina](#) village, southern suburbs of Quneitra governorate, resulted in the killing of [nine civilians](#) at once, as we have been able to document as of this writing, including [five children](#) and [two women](#). The village 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.



Victims killed in a massacre by Syrian regime forces in Ein al Tina village, Quneitra – July 17, 2018

B. Russian forces

Deir Ez-Zour governorate

Thursday, September 28, 2017, around 14:30, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired a number of missiles in [al Mayadeen](#) city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, which resulted in the killing of six civilians from the same family (five children and their father). On Friday, July 6, 2018, we were able to contact activists from the area who confirmed the incident, adding that on this day the dead bodies were pulled from the rubble. The city is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this writing, while it was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



C. Extremist Islamic groups

- ISIS

Suwayda governorate

Wednesday dawn, July 25, 2018, ISIS fighters snuck to al Shabkil village, eastern suburbs of Suwayda governorate and killed 47 residents, including three children and five women, by slaughter using knives, as well as gunshots before withdrawing. We have yet to find to the full details of the massacre as of this writing. Areas of eastern suburbs of Suwayda governorate are under the control of Syrian regime forces.

D. Other parties

Aleppo governorate

Monday, July 23, 2018, an IED planted inside a car in the middle of Bab Laymoun village, which is administratively a part of al Ra'ie town, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, exploded. Six civilians were killed in the bombing, including one female child. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing on account of the considerable difficulties in identifying the responsible party in such bombings. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Syrian regime and Russian forces

- The Syrian-Russian alliance has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be ceased. Also, The Syrian and Russian regime have violated Article 7 and 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.
- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted defenseless civilians. Therefore, Syrian and 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.
- The attacks mentioned in this report that were carried out by The Syrian and Russian regimes, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area rather than a specific military object.
- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.



- The magnitude of the massacres, their frequent nature, the exaggerated use of power, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks must be based on high orders, and a state policy.

The Coalition (international coalition and SDF)

The attacks by Coalition forces have caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damages to civilian facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Other forces

ISIS and other parties have perpetrated massacres, according to this report, that constitute war crimes. However, we don't believe that these massacres qualify as crimes against humanity, as with the Syrian regime and pro-regime forces who perpetrate massacres in a systematic and widespread manner.

Conclusions

Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps after resolution 2139 and 2254 were adopted, and no pledges to cease 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 should 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 and Iranian regimes who are 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 brought 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 to 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 massacres 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.

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.
- Completely cease bombing hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect the customary international humanitarian 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. 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.

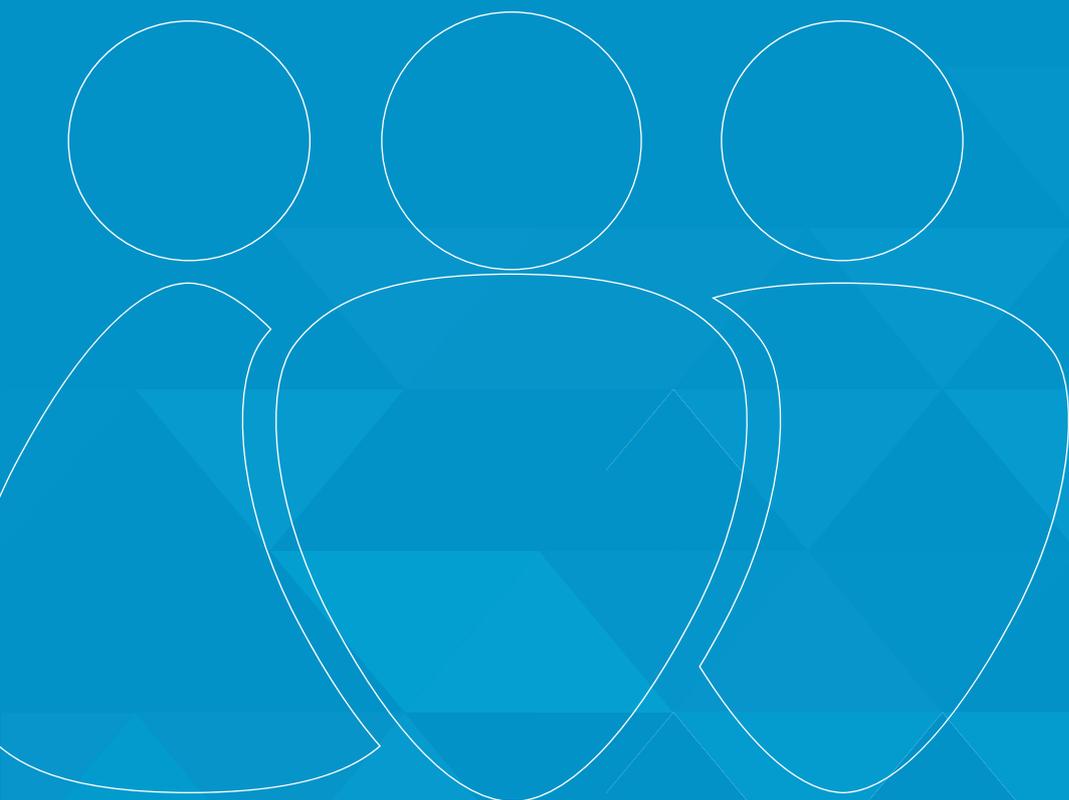
Armed opposition factions

Ensure the protection of civilians in all of their areas of control. Also, armed opposition factions should distinguish between civilians and military targets, and cease any indiscriminate attacks.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our thanks to the residents, victims' families, eyewitnesses, and local community activists who contributed effectively to this report. Also, our most heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and friends.





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