

Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2019, Particularly in December

Syrian-Russian Alliance Continues Bombing Schools and Hospitals and Using Cluster Munitions Up to the End of 2019

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Sunday, January 5, 2020

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

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The SNHR has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report refers to the statistics documenting the most notable human rights violations in Syria according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database in 2019; our expanded annual report will be issued in the next few days. This report includes details of the human rights situation in Syria in December 2019, and catalogues the record



of civilian victims whom we documented as having been killed by the main parties to the conflict during these two periods, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights indiscriminate attacks and the use of outlawed weapons (cluster munitions, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons) and attacks on civilian objects. We would like to point out that vital civilian facilities remain legally inviolable even if they are put out of service; it is inexcusable to seize a school, mosque or church on the pretext of destruction or not being used, and we therefore consider this a violation of the right of these facilities, and will document incidents of this nature as such. The report also includes documentation of violations distributed according to the perpetrator parties responsible for each one. Accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks. On some occasions, when we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for specific attacks to one particular party, as in the case of air strikes by Syrian or Russian warplanes, Syrian-Iranian attacks, or attacks by Syrian Democratic Forces and International Coalition forces, we indicate that responsibility for these attacks is held jointly by the parties in question until we are able to likely establish which one of the parties was likely responsible, or it's proved that the attack was a joint initiative carried out in coordination between the two parties. In addition, in cases where we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for a particular violation to one of two possible parties because of the area's proximity to the lines of engagement, the use of similar weapons, or other reasons, the incident is categorized among 'other parties' until we have sufficient evidence to conclusively assign responsibility for the violation to one of the two parties.

This report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on information from our extensive network of relations with various sources that have been built up over the course of our work since 2011. When we receive information or learn some news about violations via the internet or media outlets, our team works to follow up these reports and attempts to verify information and collect evidence and data. In some cases, researchers are able to visit the incident location promptly, although this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks involved, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the scarcity of human and material resources to carry out this work. Therefore, the opportunities available to access evidence vary between one case and another, and consequently the level of certainty in classification of each incident varies. SNHR's customary policy in such cases is to rely on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the Internet and media outlets. We also talk with medical personnel who treated the injured in these incidents, examined the deceased victims' bodies, and identified the cause of death.



SNHR also analyzes videos and photographs that our team has documented, or which were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. These videos and photos show, amongst other things, sites of attacks, and the bodies of the deceased victims and the injured, the scale of destruction, and the remnants of the incendiary and cluster munitions and other munitions used, whilst other photos may show victims killed under torture, and victims amongst medical and media personnel who died in attacks carried out by parties to the conflict. We also retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in these reports, which are also reviewed in this report, in a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies, and we ensure always that all these data are stored with their original source. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by the Syrian Regime forces and some other armed groups. Readers are welcome to find out more about our methodology¹.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. December Outline

In early December, the military campaign by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on northwest Syria continued, resulting in the deaths of dozens of people and displacing tens of thousands from the southern and eastern suburbs of Idlib to the far north of Syria.

During the few days directly before and after the fourteenth round of Astana Talks on Syria in the Kazakh capital, Nursultan (December 10-11), northwest Syria witnessed an almost complete cessation of raids by the Russian and Syrian Air Forces, which lasted from December 8 to December 15.

On December 15, however, we recorded the beginning of a new military campaign aimed at controlling Ma'aret al Numan city and its environs, in which Russian forces applied the same tactic they had previously employed in taking control of Khan Sheikhoun, namely ferocious carpet-bombing similar to the Grozny model by destroying as many civilians' homes as possible, terrorizing the people and forcing them to surrender and leave.

¹ "Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology", Syrian Network for Human Rights, <http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf>



This campaign, led by Syrian Regime forces and allies, has managed - up to the time of the report's preparation - to take control of approximately 10 percent of the area under the control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham. The area now controlled by the regime includes the Turkish observation post in al Sarman village, meaning that two Turkish posts are now located in areas controlled by Syrian Regime forces, the first being the observation post located in Morek town in the northern suburbs of Hama. We have issued [a report](#) outlining the most notable violations committed during that period.

On the 20th of December, both Russia and China used [veto power](#) against the renewal of Security Council Resolution 2449, which requires that the United Nations be re-authorized to enter aid into Syria using border crossings not controlled by Syrian Regime forces, which will expire on January 10, 2020; this will adversely affect the provision of desperately needed relief to tens of thousands of civilians who were displaced by the Russian and Syrian regimes' bombardment. We note that this was the fourteenth time that Russia used its veto power in favor of the Syrian regime since 2011.

In the early hours of December 24, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Turkey sent an email in English to organizations operating in Idlib, referring to a humanitarian truce under which bombing would cease until 18:00 of the same day on the two main routes linking Ma'aret al Numan city to both Saraqeb and Ariha cities. As with previous such truces, the Russian-Syrian alliance did not respect this announced truce, with SNHR's team recording at least 14 air and ground attacks carried out by Russian-Syrian alliance forces within the announced truce period.

The military attacks by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces caused material damage in many vital civilian facilities, most notably medical facilities, schools and markets; with the increasing intensity of the campaign, many of them suspended their operations for fear of being bombed. On December 24, the Syrian-American Medical Society (SAMS) [issued](#) a statement announcing the suspension of operations in both al Salam Maternity Hospital and al Ma'ara National Hospital - both in Ma'aret al Numan city - and the evacuation of their medical staff and patients, given the conditions prevailing in the region.

On December 30, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [issued](#) its third report on developments of the situation in northwest Syria, in which it noted that 284,000 civilians had fled between December 1-29 towards the far north of Syria, and that Ma'aret al Numan city and its suburbs has been almost completely emptied of their residents, while the displacement from Saraqeb and its eastern suburbs continues, as the military operations extend to areas close to them. We further note that the Russian-Syrian



alliance forces have obstructed the movement of the displaced people, with the aim of exposing them to more difficulties and humiliation; this was achieved most of the time by warplanes strafing the main roads crowded with vehicles carrying tens of thousands of the displaced people with machine guns. These forces also bombed random groups of IDP tents several times, most notably a Russian attack on a random camp in Joubas village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib, which caused a massacre, an attack which took place within hours of OCHA announcing the latest supposed truce on December 24.

In December, bombings continued, particularly in areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces in northeast Syria, causing dozens of deaths, injuries, and damage to vital civilian facilities. The same applies to the regions of northwest Syria, which witnessed bombings and assassinations that caused casualties and material damage.

In December, Syrian Democratic Forces allowed approximately 500 families, most of whom were from Deir Ez-Zour suburbs, to leave al Hawl camp in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka, in groups, following the payment of bail by the tribal dignitaries there.

Also throughout December, Syrian Regime forces continued to pursue and arrest individuals who had settled their security situation in areas that have signed settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in the governorates of Damascus Suburbs and Daraa. Also in December, we documented a number of arrests, which included elderly people and women, for expressing opinions and making phone calls to areas outside the Syrian regime's control.

Meanwhile, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance throughout the month of December, targeting activists and members of civil society groups who oppose SDF's policies. These arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour.

December also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arresting media activists and civilians, with most of these arrests occurring due to the publication of reports on social media accounts criticizing the HTS's management of areas under its control, or because of the victims' participation in protests against HTS.

Factions of the Armed Opposition also continued in December carrying out arrests and kidnappings, most of which occurred on a mass scale, targeting members of the same family and including women, under the pretext of cooperating with SDF, which were concentrated in areas under their control in Aleppo governorate.

With the deterioration of weather conditions in December, and in light of the weak response by humanitarian organizations, IDPs in the overcrowded camps in northern Syria have been suffering from floods that wash away tents, as well as a shortage of heating materials and an increase in the rate of diseases affecting the most vulnerable, particularly children and the elderly.



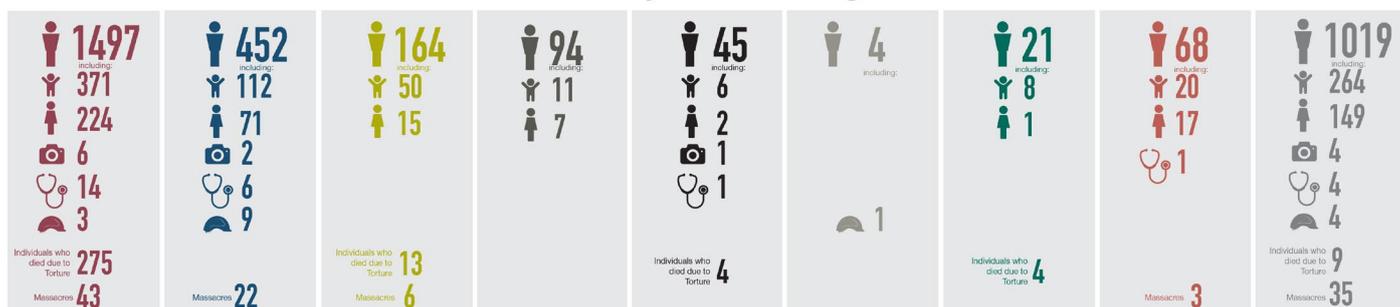
III. Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2019, and the Most Notable Violations Documented according to the SNHR's Database

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in 2019 at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria.

Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2019

Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	SDF (mainly PYD)	ISIS	Extremist Islamist groups Hay'at Tahrir al Sham Turkistan Islamic Party	Factions of the Armed Opposition	International Coalition forces	Other parties
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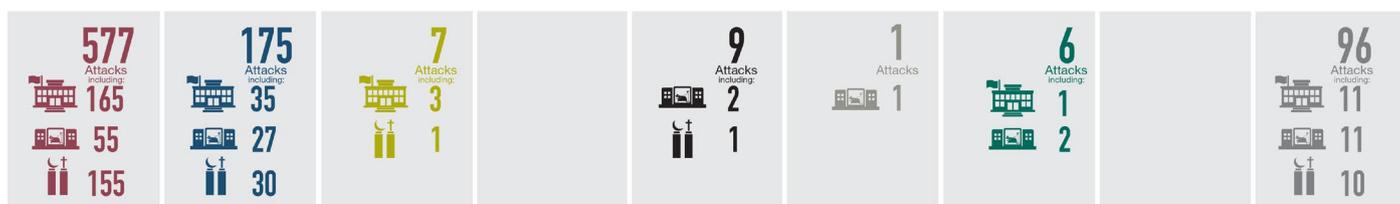
Extrajudicial Killing



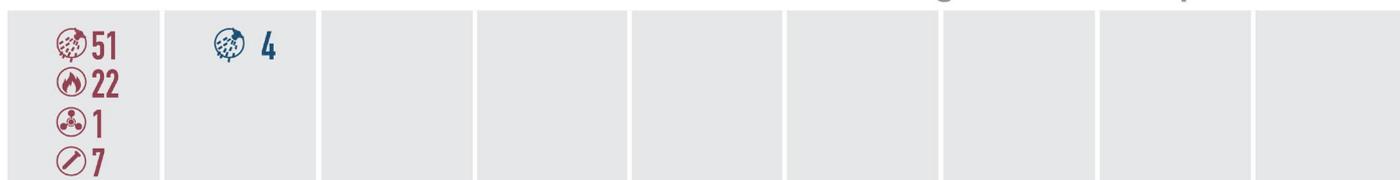
Arbitrary Arrests and Unlawful Detention



Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities



Record of Indiscriminate Attacks and Attacks Using Outlawed Weapons



At least 4378 barrel bombs were dropped by the Syrian Regime air force, resulting in the deaths of 105 civilians, including 26 children and 26 women

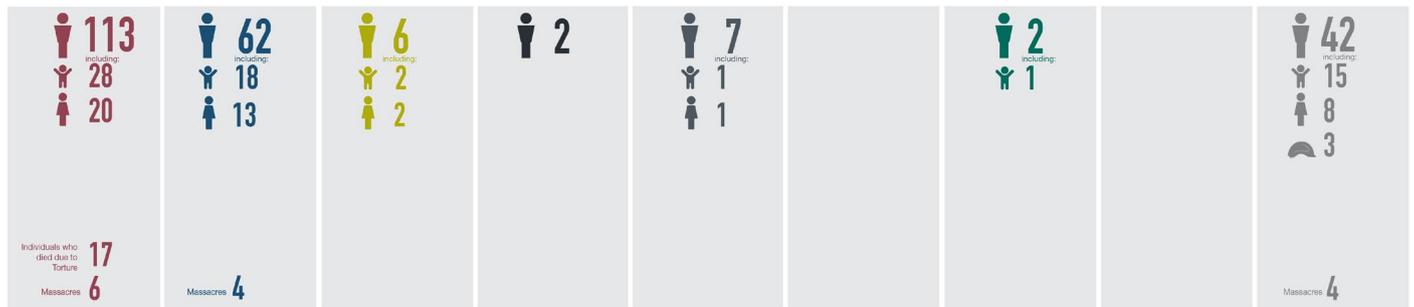


The report also outlines what SNHR documented in December 2019.

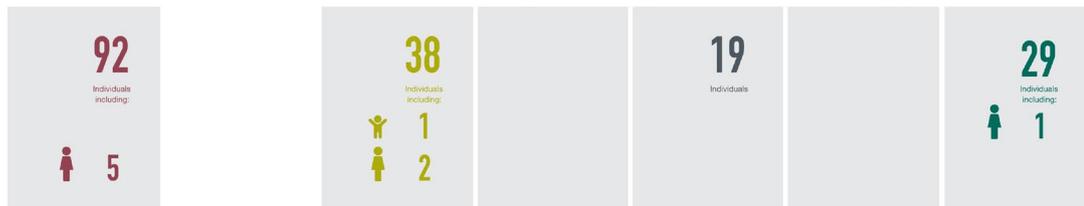
Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December 2019

Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	SDF (mainly PYD)	ISIS	Extremist Islamist groups		Factions of the Armed Opposition	International Coalition forces	Other parties
				Hay'at Tahrir al Sham	Turkistan Islamic Party			

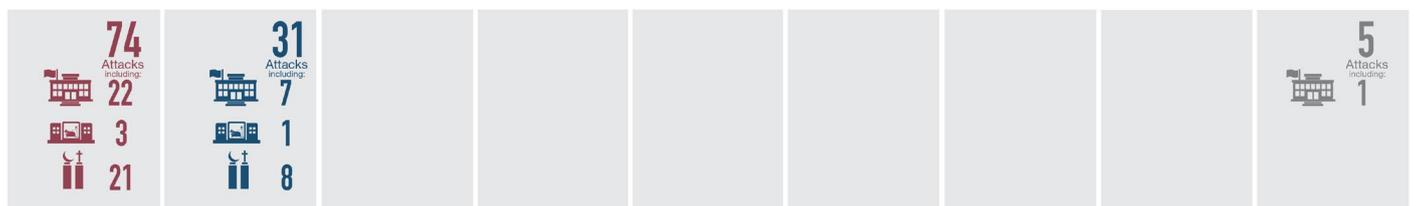
Extrajudicial Killing



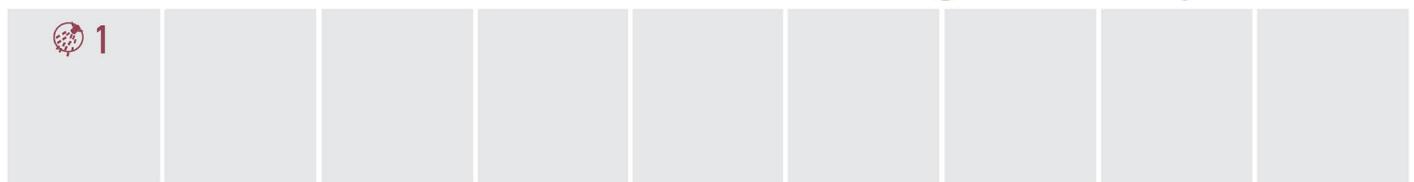
Arbitrary Arrests and Unlawful Detention



Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities



Record of Indiscriminate Attacks and Attacks Using Outlawed Weapons



At least 453 barrel bombs were dropped by the Syrian Regime air force, resulting in the deaths of 15 civilians, including 7 children and 3 women



A. Extrajudicial killing:

1. In 2019:

In 2019, SNHR documented the deaths of 3,364 civilians, including 842 children and 486 women (adult female), the largest percent of whom were killed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces; among the victims were 26 medical personnel, 13 media workers and 17 Civil Defense personnel. We also documented the deaths of 305 individuals due to torture, and at least 109 massacre. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in 2019 at the hands of the perpetrator parties in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 1,497 civilians, including 371 children and 224 women.
- **Russian forces:** 452 civilians, including 112 children and 71 women
- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'):** 94 civilians, including 11 children and seven women.

o **Extremist Islamist groups: Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition):** 45 civilians, including six children and two women.

o **Turkistan Islamic Party:** four civilians.

- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 21 civilians, including eight children and one woman.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 164 civilians, including 50 children and 15 women.
- **US-led coalition:** 68 civilians, including 20 children and 17 women.

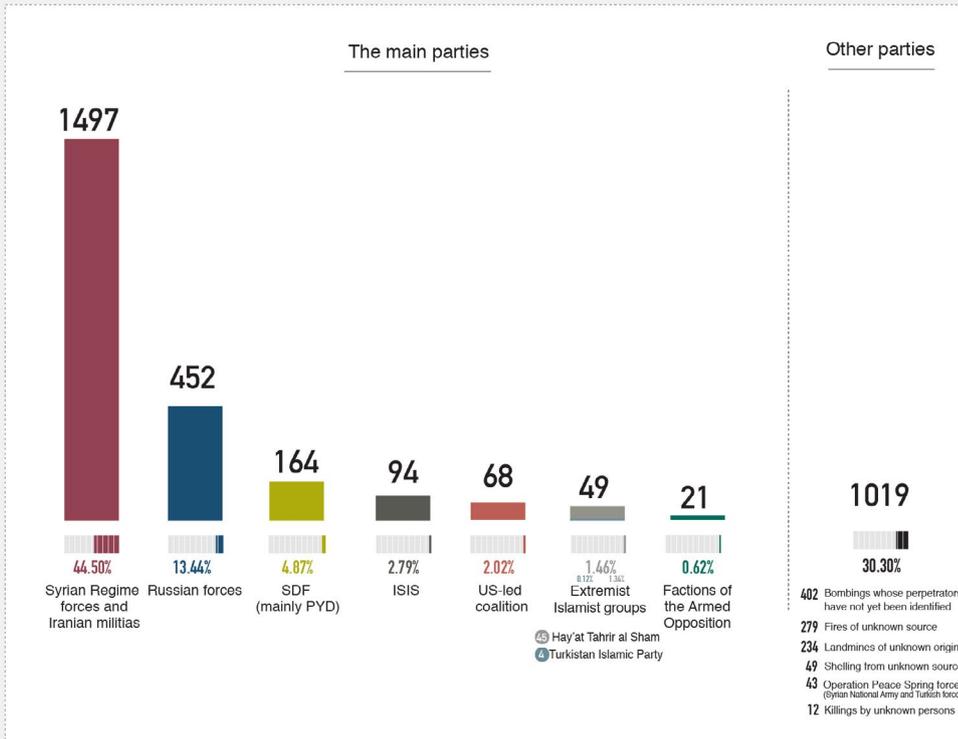
B. Other parties:

Killed 1,019 civilians, including 264 children and 194 women, distributed as follows:

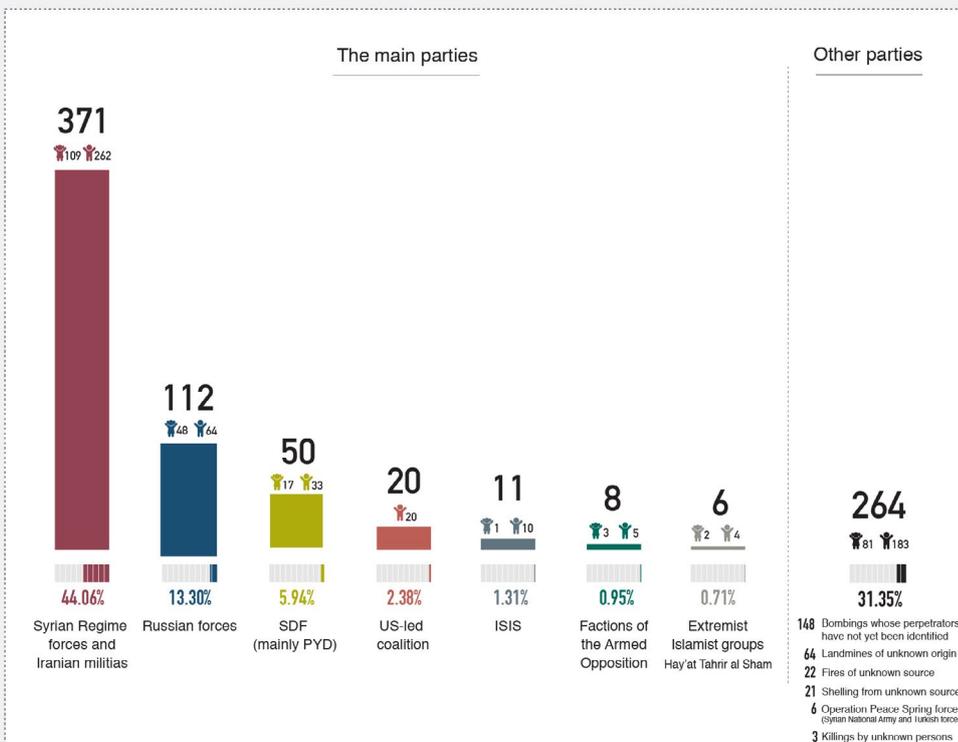
- Shelling from unknown source: 49 civilians, including 21 children and eight women.
- Landmines of unknown origin: 234 civilians, including 64 children and 39 women.
- Fires of unknown source: 279 civilians, including 22 children and 19 women.
- Operation Peace Spring forces (Syrian National Army and Turkish forces): 43 civilians, including six children and 10 women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 402 civilians, including 148 children and 66 women.
- Killings by unknown persons: 12 civilians, including three children and seven women.

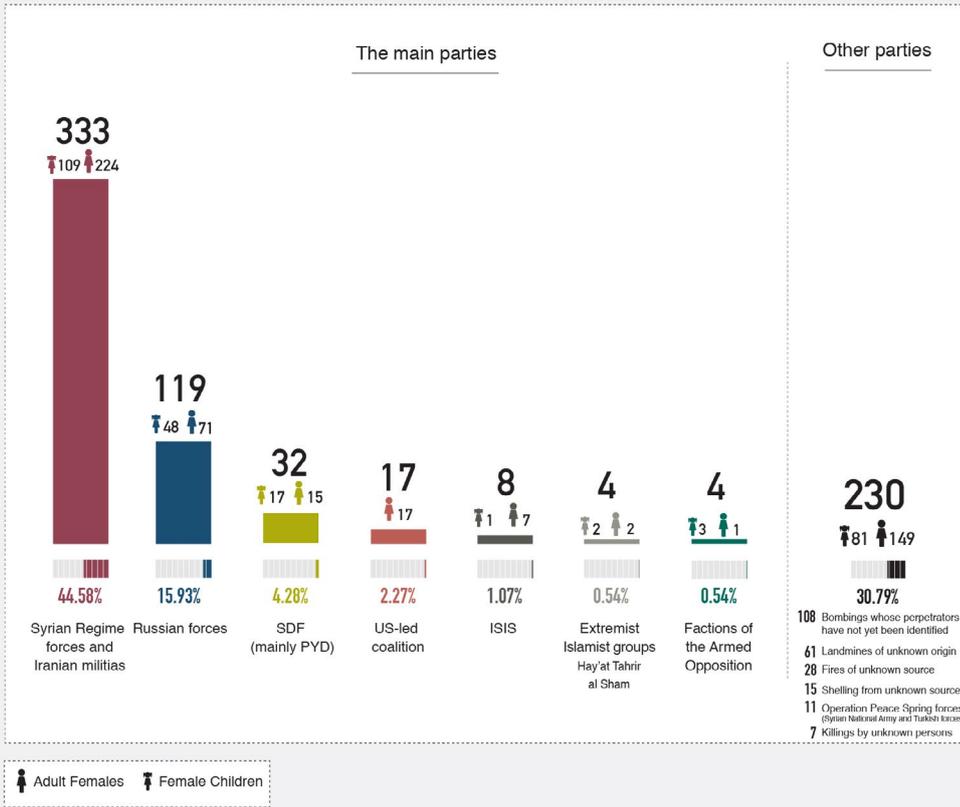


3364 civilians were killed in Syria in 2019



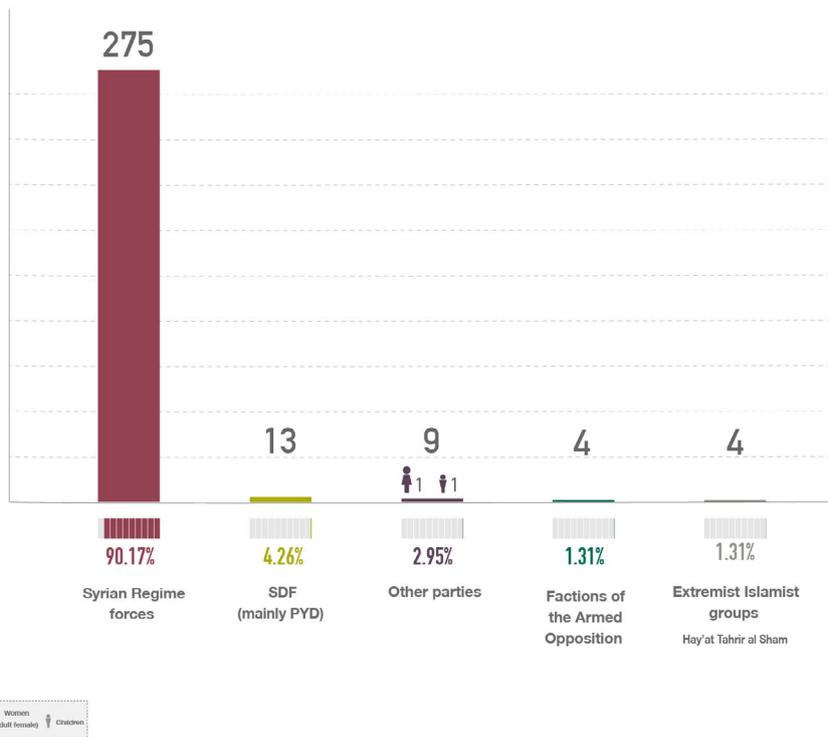
842 children were killed in Syria in 2019





747 females were killed in Syria in 2019

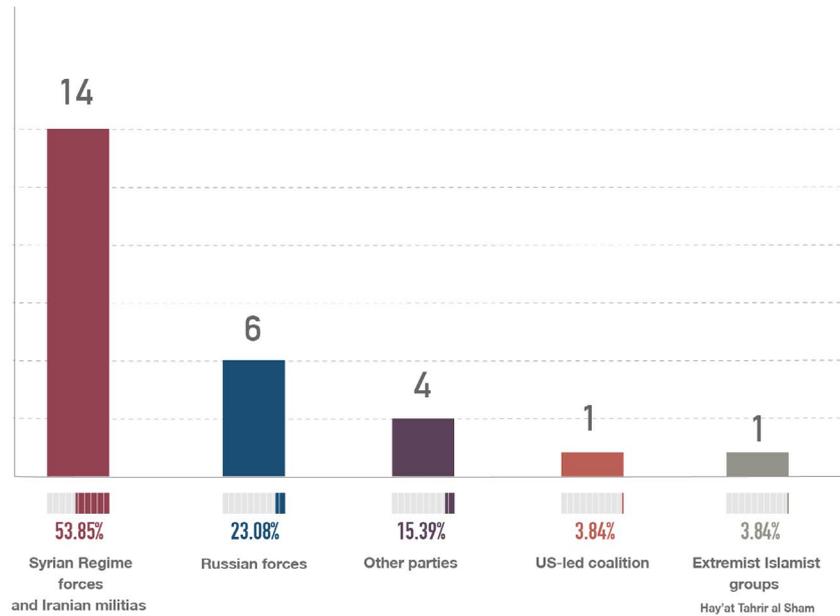
Distributed as follows:



305 individuals died due to torture at the hands of the main parties in Syria in 2019

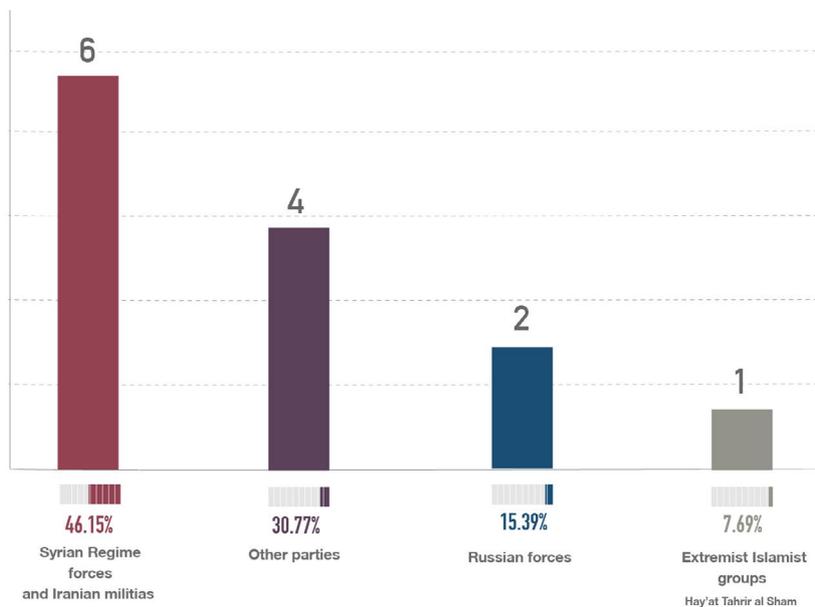


Distributed as follows:



26
medical personnel
were killed
at the hands of
the main parties in Syria in
2019

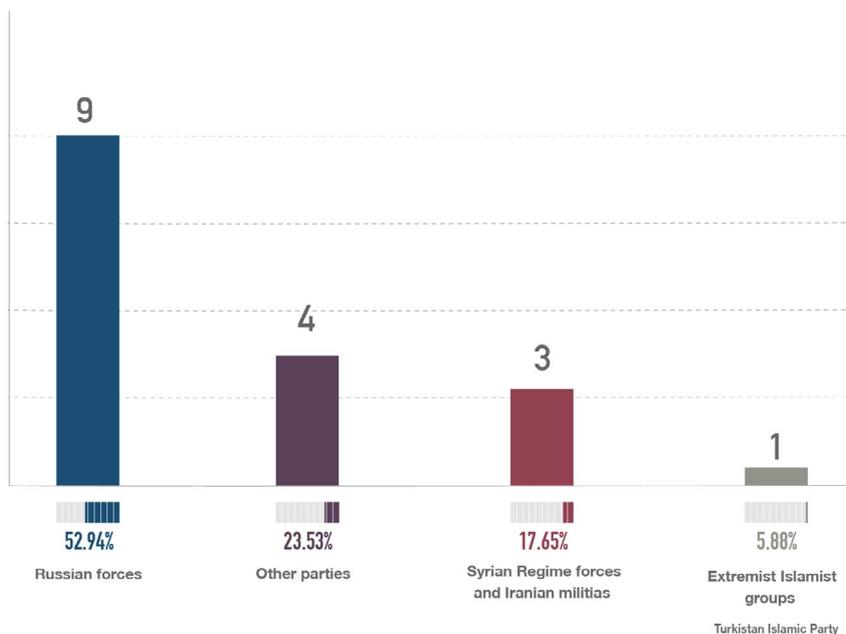
Distributed as follows:



13
media workers
were killed
at the hands of
the main parties in Syria in
2019



Distributed as follows:

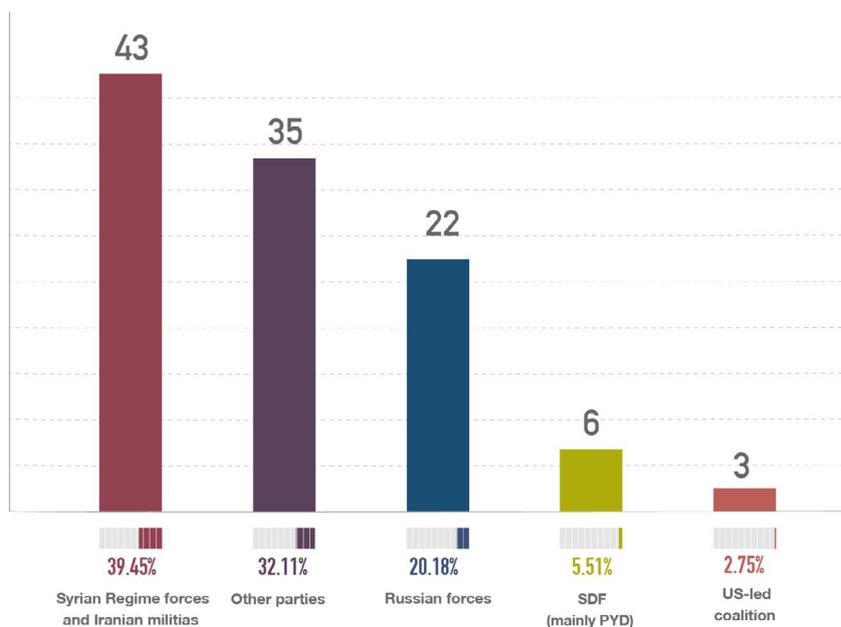


17
Civil Defense
personnel
were killed
at the hands of

the main parties in Syria in

2019

Distributed as follows:



At least
109
massacres
were committed
at the hands of the
main parties in Syria in

2019



2. In December 2019:

In December 2019, SNHR documented the deaths of 234 civilians, including 65 children and 44 women (adult female); among the victims were three Civil Defense personnel. We also documented the deaths of 17 individuals due to torture, and at least 14 massacres. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in December at the hands of the perpetrator parties in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the main perpetrator parties as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 113 civilians, including 28 children and 20 women.
- **Russian forces:** 62, including 18 children and 13 women.
- **ISIS:** Two.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** Seven, including one child and one woman, all killed by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** Two, including one child.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Six, including two children and two women.

B. Other parties:

Killed 42 civilians, including 15 children and eight women, distributed as follows:

- Shelling from unknown source: 21 civilians, including 12 children and four women.
- Fires of unknown source: 14 civilians, including two children and four women
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Four civilians, including one child.
- Landmines of unknown origin: Three civilians.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

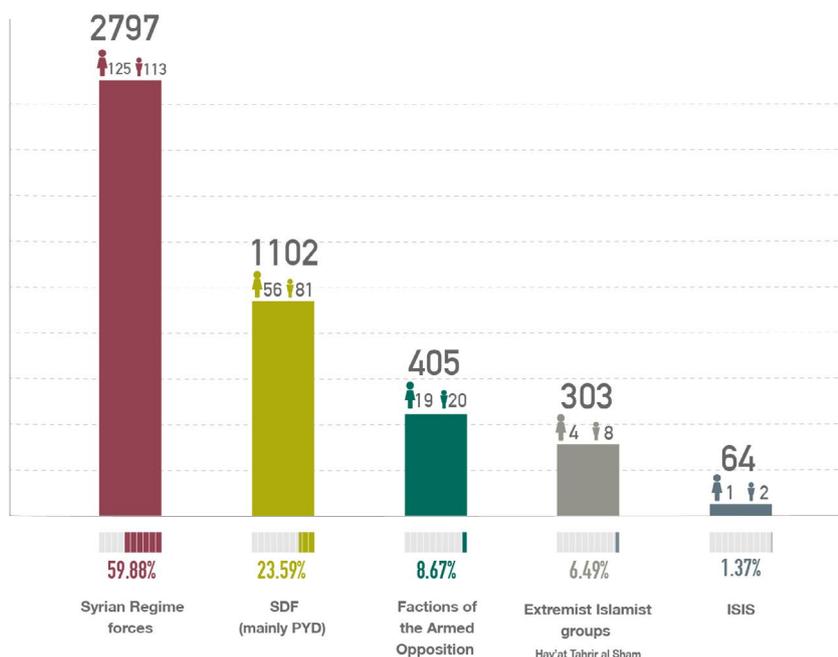
1. In 2019:

SNHR documented in 2019 at least 4,671 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 224 children and 205 women (adult female), at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Damascus Suburbs, followed by Daraa then Deir Ez-Zour governorate. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in 2019 at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria.

These arrests are distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:



Distributed as follow :



At least
4671
cases of
arbitrary arrest
in Syria by the
perpetrator parties in
2019

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 2,797 individuals, including 113 children and 125 women.
- **ISIS:** 64 individuals, including two children and one woman.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 303 individuals, including eight children and four women, all at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 405 individuals, including 20 children and 19 women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 1,102 individuals, including 81 children and 56 women.

2. In December 2019:

SNHR documented in December 2019 at least 178 cases of arbitrary arrests, including one child and eight women (adult female), at the hands of the perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Damascus Suburbs then Aleppo governorate. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in December 2019 at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria.

These arrests are distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 92, including five women.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 19, all at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 29, including one woman.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 38, including one child and two women.



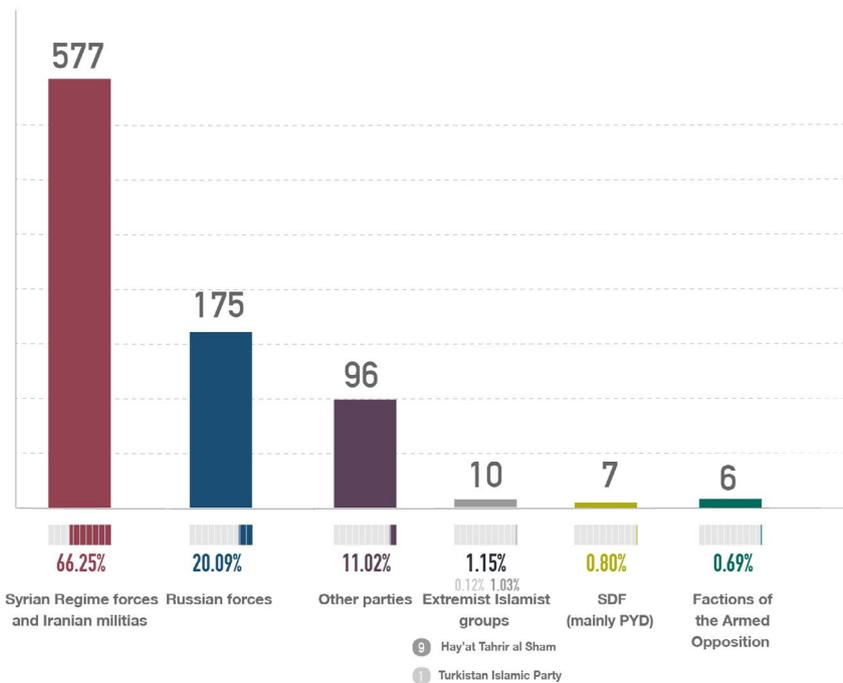
C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

1. In 2019:

SNHR documented in 2019 at least 871 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, 725 of which were carried out at the hands of Syria-Russian alliance forces in northwest Syria. Among these attack, we documented 215 on schools, 98 on medical facilities and 197 others on places of worship.

These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Distributed as follows:



At least
871
incidents
of attacks
on vital civilian
facilities at the hands
of the main parties in
2019

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 577.
- **Russian forces:** 175.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 10, distributed as follows:
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: Nine.
 - o Turkistan Islamic Party: One.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** Six.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Seven.
- **Other parties:** 96.



The record of attacks documented in 2019 on vital civilian facilities is distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party						
	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Extremist Islamist groups		Factions of the Armed Opposition	Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties
			Hay'at Tahrir al Sham	Turkistan Islamic Party			
Places of Worship							
Mosques	154	30	1			1	8
Churches and monasteries	1						2
Vital Educational Facilities							
Schools	165	35			1	3	11
Universities	1						1
Educational Institutions	1						1
Nurseries	3						
Orphanages							1
Vital Medical Facilities							
Medical Facilities	55	27	2	1	2		11
Ambulances	4	7					4
Vital Cultural Facilities							
Archeological sites	1	3					
Museums	3						
Communal Facilities							
Gardens	2						2
Markets	37	2					21
Playgrounds and stadiums	4						
International Humanitarian Insignia							
Red Crescent							1



Infrastructure							
Power stations and energy facilities	3	2			2		2
Civil Defense Centers	52	25					3
Water facilities and related resources	9	4				1	3
Official Headquarters	22	10	4				9
Means of transport	1		1		1		1
Bakeries	27	14					4
Domestic animal farms	1	4					
Grain silos		1					
Industrial facilities	3	3	1				
Civil society organizations	15	1					2
Media	3						
IDP Camps							
IDP camps	10	7				2	9
Total	577	175	9	1	6	7	96

2. In December 2019:

SNHR documented in December at least 110 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, 105 of which were carried out at the hands of Syria-Russian alliance forces, mostly in Idlib governorate.

Among these attack, we documented 30 on schools, four on medical facilities and 29 others were on places of worship.

These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 74.
- **Russian forces:** 31.
- **Other parties:** Five attacks, distributed as follows:
 - **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** Three.
 - **Landmines of unknown origin:** One.
 - **Attacks by unknown groups:** One.



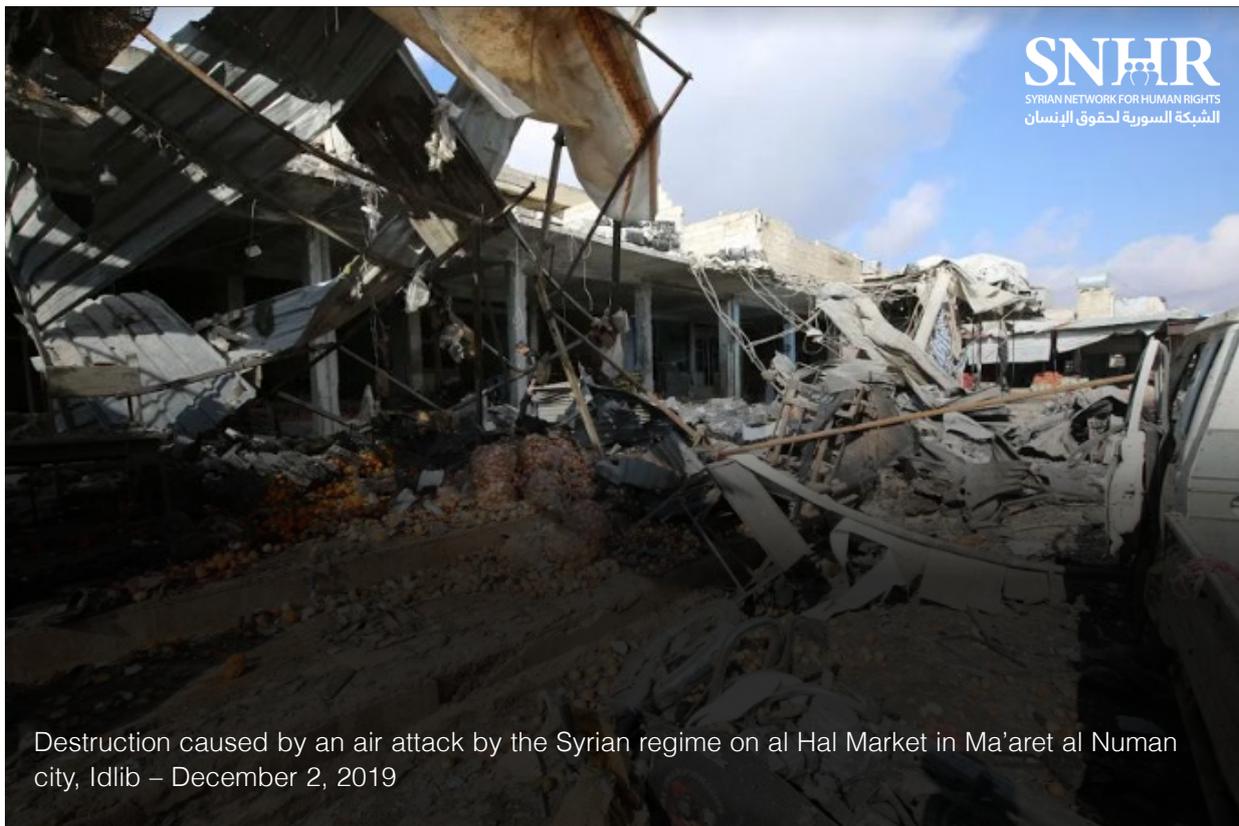
The record of attacks documented in December on vital civilian facilities is distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party				
	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Other parties		
			Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified	Landmines of unknown origin	Attacks by unknown groups
Places of Worship					
Mosques	21	8	-	-	-
Vital Educational Facilities					
Schools	22	7	-	1	-
Vital Medical Facilities					
Medical Facilities	3	1	-	-	-
Communal Facilities					
Markets	11	1	3	-	-
Playgrounds and stadiums	1	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure					
Power stations and energy facilities	-	-	-	-	1
Civil Defense Centers	2	-	-	-	-
Water facilities and related resources	-	2	-	-	-
Official Headquarters	1	1	-	-	-
Bakeries	6	5	-	-	-
Domestic animal farms		2	-	-	-
Industrial facilities	-	2	-	-	-
Civil society organizations	5	-	-	-	-
Media	2	-	-	-	-
IDP Camps					
IDP camps	-	2	-	-	-
Total	74	31	3	1	1



The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities that we were able to document in December:
On Sunday, December 1, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a missile at al Barsa Primary School in [al Barsa](#) village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, partially destroying the school building and perimeter wall, and causing [moderate material damage](#) to its furniture. We note that the school's operations had been suspended due to the displacement of the village residents as a result of the ongoing military escalation campaign by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the fourth de-escalation zone since April 26, 2019. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Monday, December 2, 2019, fixed-wing (Su-22) Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at the middle of [al Hal Market](#), east of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in a massacre, [in addition](#) to [partially destroying a number of shops](#), and [causing severe material damage](#) to [the market facilities and vendors' stands](#). Ma'aret al Numan city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at around 14:15, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired eight missiles at Saraqeb city in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, one of which fell in front of the city's Othman bin Affan Mosque, partially destroying the mosque building, and inflicting [moderate material](#) damage to its furniture. Saraqeb city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Saturday, December 7, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a number of air raids using missiles on two poultry farms in Jabal al Dwaila area near Kafr Takhareem town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate; the attack began around 22:05 and continued until 22:20, [resulting](#) in [the deaths](#) of [a large number](#) of [chick-ens](#), and inflicting severe destruction on the two farms. The area was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.



On Saturday, December 7, 2019, at around 14:00, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the main market, known as al Albesa (clothes) Market, in the middle of [Balyoun](#) village in Jabal al Zaweya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in a massacre, [in addition](#) to [inflicting severe](#) destruction on [a number of shops](#), and [causing significant](#) material damage to the market facilities. Balyoun village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, December 7, 2019, at around 09:45, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs that fell near the [Union of Revolutionary Bureaus \(URB\) building in](#) Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [inflicting severe](#) destruction on the building. Kafranbel city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Monday, December 16, 2019, at around 17:30, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on the Ma'ar Shoreen School for boys in Ma'ar Shoreen village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The barrel fell in the middle of the schoolyard, [partially destroying the school building](#), and causing severe material damage to its furniture. Ma'ar Shoreen village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



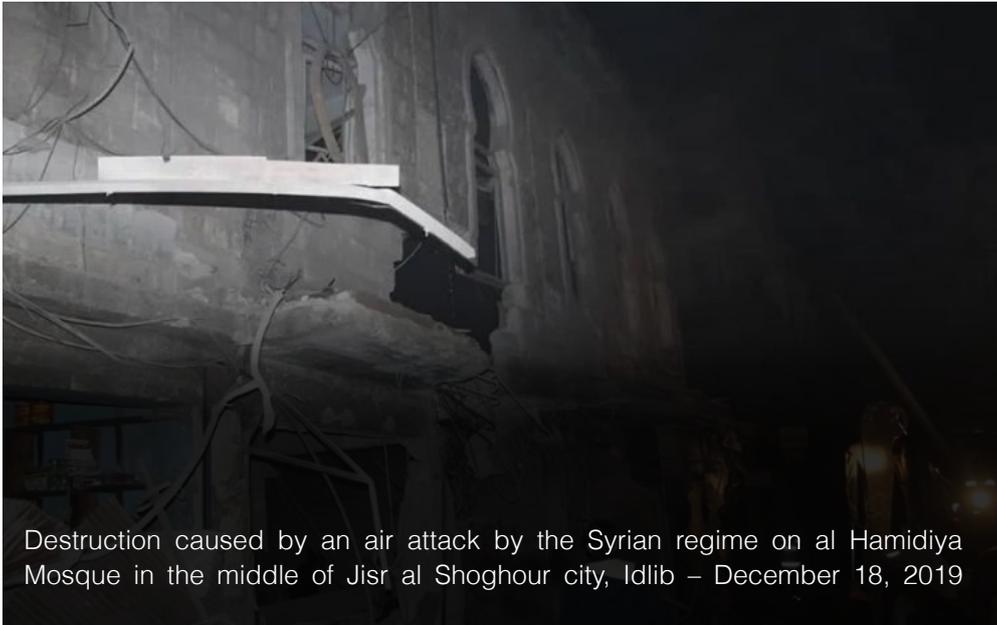
On Tuesday, December 17, 2019, at around 12:00, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at al Sayyedah Fatima Prayer Place in Ma'ar Shamarin village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [completely destroying the mosque building](#) and putting it out of service. Ma'ar Shamarin village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, December 18, 2019, at around 10:15, Syrian Regime forces used heavy artillery simultaneously with missile launchers to shell the Ma'aret al Numan Emergency Center affiliated with the Violet Organization for Relief and Development in Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying](#) the center, and [causing moderate](#) material damage to its furniture. Ma'aret al Numan city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, December 18, 2019, fixed-wing (L-39) Syrian regime warplanes carried out an airstrike using heavy machine guns and small-size missiles on al Hamidiya Mosque located in the Vegetable Market in the center of Jisr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the mosque's](#) building, and causing moderate material damage to its furniture. Jisr al Shoghour city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction caused by an air attack by the Syrian regime on al Hamidiya Mosque in the middle of Jisr al Shoghhour city, Idlib – December 18, 2019

On Monday, December 23, 2019, a car bomb exploded in the popular market in Slouk town, which is administratively a part of Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, resulting in a massacre, in addition to causing severe material damage to a number of shops. We are still trying to reach witnesses to and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The town was under the control of Peace Spring forces (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces) at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, December 24, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at [Khaled bin al Walid Mosque](#) in al Deir al Gharbi village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying](#) the mosque building, and inflicting moderate material damage to its furniture. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, December 24, 2019, at around 09:29, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired two missiles, one of which hit the preparatory school in the southern outskirts of Joubas village, south of Saraqeb city in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while the second missile hit a random IDP camp adjacent to the school, resulting in a massacre, in addition to destroying part of the school perimeter wall, and caused significant [material damage](#) to the [school cladding materials and furniture](#). Joubas village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, December 25, 2019, two motorcycle bombs exploded in the middle of the market of [Jarablos](#) city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the injury of five civilians, [in addition](#) to [causing moderate material damage](#) to a [number of shops](#). We are still trying to reach witnesses to and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The city was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

D. Record of indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons:

1. In 2019:

SNHR documented at least 56 cluster munition attacks in 2019. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 65 civilians, including 22 children and 14 women, and injured 136 others. These attacks were distributed as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 52 attacks, distributed across governorates as follows:
 - Hama governorate: One.
 - Idlib governorate: 51.

These attacks resulted in the deaths of 64 civilians, including 22 children and 14 women (adult female), and injured 132 others.

- **Russian forces:** Four attacks, distributed across governorates as follows:
 - Hama governorate: One.
 - Idlib governorate: Three.

These attacks injured four individuals.

The SNHR documented at least 22 incendiary weapons attacks in 2019, all carried out by Syrian Regime forces, distributed across governorates as follows:

- Hama governorate: Nine.
- Idlib governorate: 13.

We also documented the use of chemical weapon in at least one attack by Syrian Regime forces on al Kbaina village in Latakia governorate. This attack resulted in the injury of four of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's fighters.

SNHR documented at least seven attacks using nail-filled missiles in 2019, all of which were carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Idlib governorate.



The Syrian Regime's air force, including helicopters and fixed-wing warplanes, also dropped at least 4,378 barrel bombs in 2019, all on the fourth de-escalation zone, distributed as follows:

- Idlib governorate: 2,335
- Hama governorate: 1,544
- Latakia governorate: 499

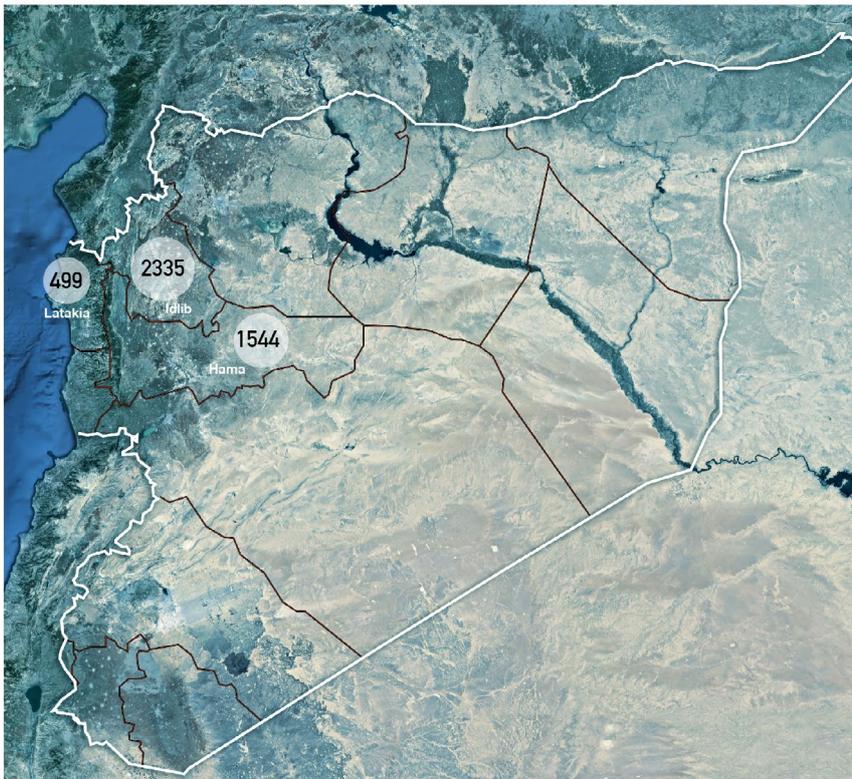
These attacks resulted in the deaths of 105 civilians, including 26 children and 26 women.

The death toll of victims was distributed across governorates as follows:

- Idlib governorate: 96 civilians, including 25 children and 25 women.
- Hama governorate: Nine civilians, including one female child and one woman.

These barrel bomb attacks also included at least 93 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, including 37 on schools, 25 on places of worship, and eight on medical facilities.

Map showing the distribution of barrel bomb dropped by the Syrian regime's air force in 2019 across governorates:



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الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

At least

4378

barrel bombs

were dropped by

the Syrian Regime

air force in

2019



The previous map shows the Syrian regime's use of barrel bombs in northwest Syria only in 2019 when they took place with an unprecedented intensity compared to previous years. We note that the record of barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian regime's air force on these governorates was approximately six times that documented in 2018, during successive military campaigns launched by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the region since April 26.

2. In December 2019:

SNHR documented at least one cluster munition attack in December carried out by Syrian Regime forces.

The Syrian Regime's air force, including helicopters and fixed-wing warplanes, also dropped at least 543 barrel bombs on the governorates of Idlib and Latakia, distributed as follows:

- Idlib governorate: 471
- Latakia governorate: 63

These barrel bomb attacks resulted in the deaths of 15 civilians, including seven children and three women, all in Idlib governorate, and at least 28 incidents of attack on vital civilian facilities, including 13 on schools, six on places of worship and one on a medical facility.

The following are the most notable indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons that we were able to document in December:

On Sunday, December 1, 2019, Syrian Regime forces' helicopters dropped [two barrel bombs](#) on an area in Kansafra village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Iron balls among the remnants of barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian regime's helicopters on Kansafra village, Idlib – December 1, 2019



On Saturday, December 7, 2019, Syrian Regime forces' helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Abdita village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the [deaths](#) of [six civilians](#) from two families (five children – one male and four females – and one woman). Abdita village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, December 7, 2019, at around 08:30, Syrian Regime forces' helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs that fell near Ma'ar Zita Preparatory School in Ma'ar Zita village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, inflicting severe destruction on the school building and perimeter wall. Abdita village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, December 18, 2019, Syrian Regime forces' helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on [Hassan Bin Thabet Mosque](#) in Talmennes town in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the mosque building](#), and inflicting severe material damage to its furniture. Talmennes town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident



On Saturday, December 28, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile platform to fire a Tochka 9M79 missile loaded with N249 cluster submunitions, which targeted the northeastern neighborhood in Mhambel village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. Some of the submunitions exploded near the [Mhambel Bakery](#) and [al Kabir Mosque](#), causing [moderate material damage](#) to the window glass and buildings, in addition to injuring two civilians. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Remnants of Tochka 9M79 missile loaded with cluster munitions fired by Syrian Regime forces at Mhambel village, Idlib – December 3, 2019

IV. Attachments

[3,364 Civilians Documented Killed in Syria in 2019](#)

[At least 4,671 Cases of Arbitrary Arrests Documented in Syria in 2019](#)

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.



- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime, or by Russian or International Coalition forces prior to any attack in accordance with the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks leads to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the alliance of International Coalition forces and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Extremist Islamist groups have violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.
- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, caused massive collateral damage that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).



Recommendations:

Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been repeatedly proven.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians’ lives and to save the Syrian people’s heritage and historical artefacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other permanent UNSC member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons camps, and to follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted 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 dozens 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 proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while 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 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 to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

OHCHR

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict.
- Train Syrian organizations to undertake clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the dangers of such ordnance.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.

The United Nations special envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, and empower the Constitutional Commission prior to the establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Reveal the fate of some 82,000 Syrian citizens arrested by the security services whose fate has been concealed to date.



- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.
- Stop using incendiary weapons in populated areas, compensate the victims and their families for all human and material damage caused by the use of these weapons, and provide treatment for dozens of civilian casualties.
- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 82,000 people forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime.

The Coalition (US-led coalition and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Rather than attempting denial, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those affected.
- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.
- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF violates the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.



- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.
- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF members, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and affected.

Armed Opposition factions

- Armed Opposition factions must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Pledge to cease any arbitrary arrests, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

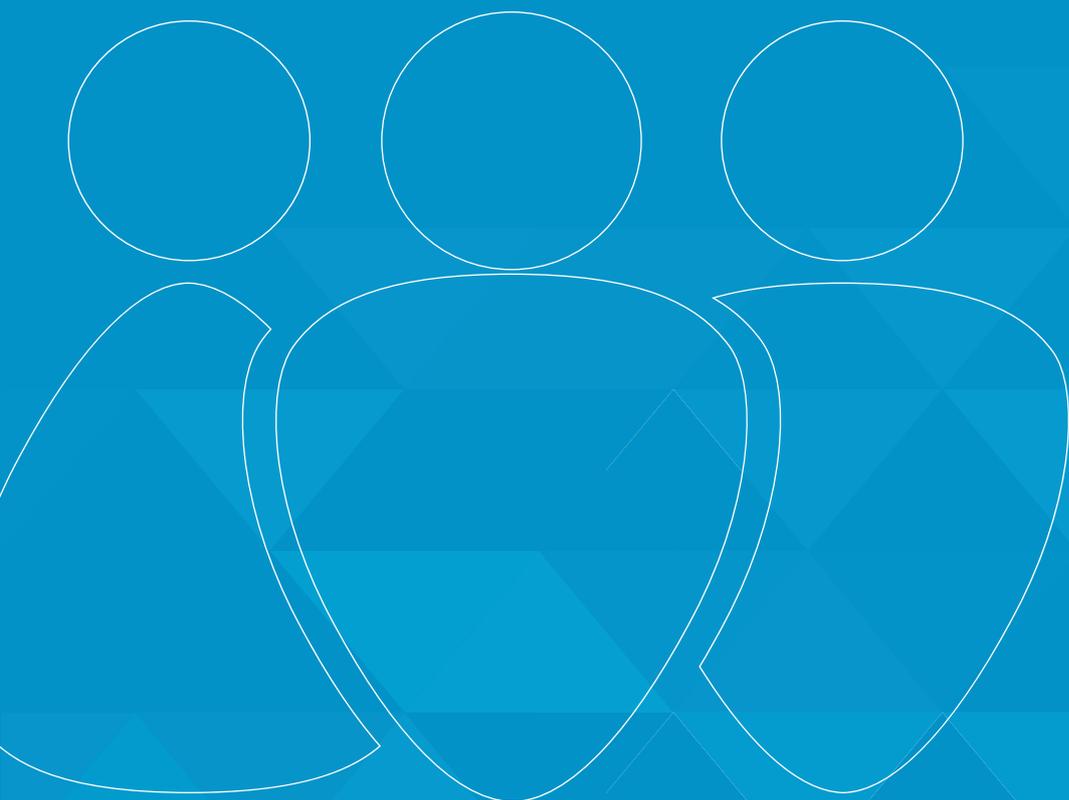
Humanitarian Organizations:

Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.

Acknowledgments

We thank all family members, relatives and friends of the victims, eyewitnesses and local activists whose contributions have enriched this report.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

