

Russian Airstrikes Have Targeted Relief Warehouses in Western Aleppo Suburbs

Killing 22 Civilians including Four Children and Seven Women in a Massacre in Batabo Village

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.



Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Details
- III. Attachments
- IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Introduction

Batabo village is administratively a part of al Atareb county, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. With a population of approximately 20,000 people, the village has been under the control of armed opposition since July 2012. A portion of the village's residents are IDPs from Hama suburbs.

This report documents a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian in the northwest neighborhood of Batabo village which resulted in the killing of 22 civilians, including four children and seven women.

Methodology

The report draws upon the ongoing monitoring of news and incidents by SNHR team through an extensive network of relations with various sources that have been built over the course of our work in the past years. When we receive information, or hear some news about a violation via the internet or media outlets, we work on following-up 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 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, in addition to analyzing whatever material available in open sources such as the internet and media. Thirdly, we rely on speaking with the medical teams that treated the wounded and examined the dead bodies to determine the cause of death.



Please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [documenting victims](#) and [classifying vital civilian facilities](#)

This report contains three accounts that were collected through speaking directly with eye-witnesses, and are not cited from any open sources. We have explained the purpose of these interviews to the eyewitnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without offering or giving them any incentives.

SNHR has tried to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible, and gave guarantees to conceal the identity of any witnesses who preferred to use an alias.

Furthermore, the investigations included in this report have proved that the targeted areas were civilian areas where no military centers or weapon warehouses for armed opposition factions or extremist Islamic groups were found before or during the attack. Also, Russian forces didn't alert the civilians prior to the attack as the international humanitarian law requires.

SNHR has analyzed the videos and pictures that were posted online, or were sent to us by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media. Some of the videos published by activists show the location of the attacks and the overwhelming destruction in the aftermath of the bombardment.

This report only represents the bare minimum, which we were able to document, of the magnitude and severity of the violation that occurred. It also doesn't cover the social, economic, and mental ramifications.

II. Details

On Wednesday, November 16, 2016, around 14:30, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired four missiles, where three missiles targeted warehouses for Ataa Relief Association in the northwest neighborhood of Batabo village, while the fourth missile targeted a residential building about 300 meters to the north of the first attack's site.



Approximate locations of the sites where the missiles landed after they were fired by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian at Batabo village, Aleppo suburbs on November 16, 2016



In total, the bombardment has resulted in the killing of 22 civilians, including four children and seven women (adult female). In addition, the residential buildings and Ataa Relief Association's warehouses have suffered severe destruction.

We contacted a worker at the "al Ishara al Markaziya" (Central Signal) which is a network that works on picking up radar signals for warplanes and tracks calls between the pilot and the airbase from which he took off. The worker gave us access to the air movement that was recorded on that day, where we compared the data with the timing of the attack as we recorded it. We've concluded that the warplanes that targeted Batabo village was likely a fixed-wing Su-24 warplane that took off from Hmeimim Military Airbase which is a Russian military facility.



Abdul Hadi Jaqla, a relative of the victims', headed for the attack site in the aftermath of the attack: **"I wasn't in the village at the time of the bombing, but I learned that it was targeted, so I rushed back fearing for the safety of my family. When I arrived, I found that my house and my family's house have been both reduced to a big tomb. I lost nine relatives on that day – my mother, my father, my brothers and their wives and children. The house and the entire neighborhood has been turned into ruins. I couldn't recognize my neighborhood, as the bombing has destroyed it completely. There are no FSA fighters or FSA checkpoints in our neighborhood. The target was relief warehouses for Ataa Relief Association. They are not satisfied with bombing us to death, but they want us to starve too."**

Omar Bakkour, husband of Dalal's who was killed in the attack, told us that he was near the first attack's site and heard the observatory workers' warnings about warplanes in the sky, but he couldn't hear or recognize them. **"A few minutes after the warnings, I saw a flash in the sky, followed by strong explosion sounds. I tried to save my child and flee the place as quickly as I can."** Omar added that he returned a few minutes and saw tens of women's and children's dead bodies lying on the ground, including his wife whose house roof collapsed over here, and she died immediately: **"The three missiles have destroyed the entire neighborhood, and the fourth missile landed about 200 meters away from the first three missiles, killing an entire family. This is a residential area. There are no military targets or gunmen. We are all civilians here."**

Abdo Salah, a worker at Ataa Relief Association whose warehouses were bombed, told us that the attack destroyed the warehouses and ruined their contents of food supplies, adding that the airstrikes were Russian: **"People who were there at the time told me that the warplanes were Russian judging from the explosion power and severity and the accuracy of the missiles. The targeting was approximately at 14:00 with four missiles. One of the missiles targeted Jaqla family's house, killing more than 11 individuals. The rest of the missiles targeted the Association's warehouses."** Salah confirmed that the site is not a military target, as there are no armed opposition factions present near it, whereas all the victims were civilians.



III. Attachments

Victims' names



[Huge destruction](#) at the [attack site](#) in the northwest neighborhood of Batabo village in the aftermath of [Russian airstrikes](#) on the village – November 16, 2016



A wounded being treated in Batabo village in the aftermath of a Russian air attack on the village – November 16, 2016

[A video showing](#) the overwhelming destruction in the aftermath of a Russian air attack on the northwest neighborhood of Batabo village – November 16, 2016



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

1- The Russian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, The Russian regime has violated Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.

2- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted defenseless civilians. Therefore, the Syrian-Russian alliance 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.

3- The attacks mentioned in this report, which were carried out by Russian warplanes, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area 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 Resolution 2139 has been adopted and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombardment operations have been made. All the 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 must be held accountable, including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has 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, looted, and ruined.
- Expand the sanctions to include the Syrian, Russian, and Iranian regimes who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.



The OHCHR

The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on this massacre in particular, and the massacres that preceded as they are a glaring point in a string of daily, sporadic massacres of a smaller scale. The OHCHR also should work on implementing the recommendations included in this report.

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 killing 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 agreement and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan have been drought out. 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.

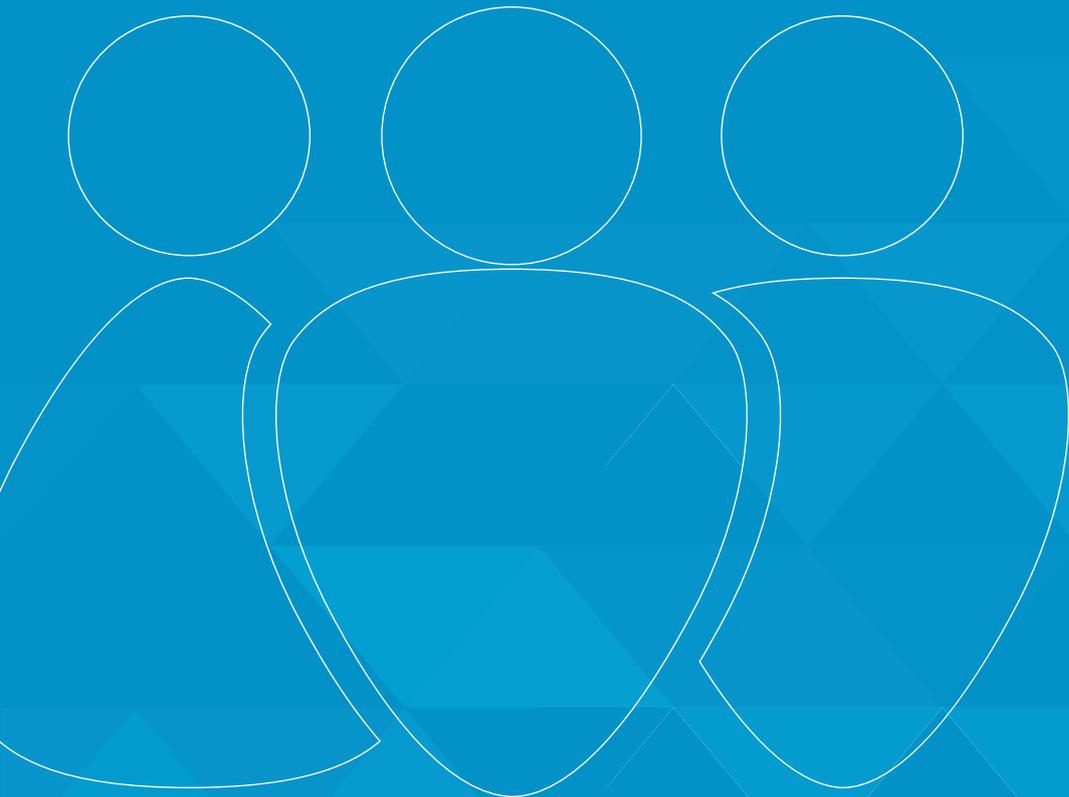
The European Union and the United States of America

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.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most heartfelt gratitude and condolences to all the residents and local activists of Bata-bo village who contributed effectively to this report.





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