

Seven Medical and Civil Defense Personnel Killed and 24 Incidents of Attack on their Vital Facilities in November 2017

Syrian Regime Forces Top all
Parties in Terms of Violations

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

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

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

“Attacks on medical and civil defense centers as well as medical and civil defense personnel are considered a blatant violation of the international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes given the chaotic, and in many cases, deliberate, targeting of protected objects. All of this have only deepened the suffering of the wounded and injured and is one of the main reasons behind the displacement of the Syrian people as it sends a very clear message: there is no safe area, or a red line, including hospitals, you either flee or perish.”

On December 30, 2016, a comprehensive ceasefire was announced from the Turkish capital Ankara under a Russian-Turkish sponsorship. The signing parties, the Syrian regime on one side and armed opposition factions on the other side, agreed to cease all armed attacks, including airstrikes, and stop raids and on-the-ground advancements. The military areas controlled by ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State) were excluded from the agreement.



Ankara Ceasefire Agreement was followed by seven rounds of talks that were held in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, between Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives as the states who sponsored Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. These rounds -the most recent of which was on October 30-31, 2017- discussed mostly, in parallel with a number of local agreements, ways to further establish de-escalation zones in Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and Quneitra governorates in south Syria. Additionally, the talks addressed ways to deliver humanitarian aids and enable IDPs to return to those areas. Since these agreements went into effect, the included areas saw a relatively good and noticeable drop in killing rates in relation to the past months since March 2011.

We noticed that these agreements reflected on the civilians' lives in most of the areas that were included in the agreements, as patients were able to go to hospitals and medical points, and many children went back to school after their families prevented them out of fear for their lives in light of the repeated bombing that targeted schools, as well as hospitals. Markets became more active, and many infrastructure services were restored thanks to a number of maintenance campaigns. Nonetheless, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the guarantors- won't see are still going on as nothing had changed.

A de-escalation agreement was reached in Eastern Ghouta between Jaish al Islam, an armed opposition faction, and Russian forces under an Egyptian sponsorship on Saturday, July 22, 2017, and was followed by a similar [agreement](#) with Failaq al Rahman faction that established the faction's inclusion in the de-escalation zone in Eastern Ghouta on Wednesday, August 16, 2017. Nonetheless, Syrian-Russian alliance have initiated a vicious offensive against Eastern Ghouta on the 14th of last November. We released a report, "[The Barbarian Bombardment and Siege on Eastern Ghouta Practically Invalidates the Upcoming Geneva Round](#)", documenting the most notable violations by the Syrian-Russian alliance between November 14-27, 2017.

In November, we recorded a rise in the toll of violations against medical and civil defense personnel from last October. The parties to the conflict returned to killing civil defense members after a one-month stop. Syrian regime forces trumped all parties by killing five, including four civil defense members. All of the five victims were killed in Eastern Ghouta as part of Syrian regime forces' offensive against the region.



We documented in this month nearly four times as many attacks on vital medical and civil defense facilities in October. Syrian regime forces were also the parties that committed the most attacks with 11 attacks. All of the attacks were in Eastern Ghouta.

Methodology

SNHR's high-level methodology for documentation relies on survivors and families' direct accounts in addition to the process of verifying and analyzing pictures, videos, and some medical records. However, we can't claim that we have documented all cases in light of the ban and pursuit by Syrian regime forces and some of the other armed groups.

The type and number of evidences vary from one case to another. In light of the challenges we mentioned above, many of the incidents' legal description change based on new evidences or clues that surface after we had released the report. We add these evidences and clues to our data archive. On the other hand, many incidents don't constitute a violation to the international humanitarian law, but it involved collateral damages, so we record and archive these incidents to know what happened historically and to preserve it as a national record. However, they don't necessarily qualify as crimes.

Please see the methodology adopted by SNHR in [victim documentation](#) and [classifying civilian vital facilities](#)

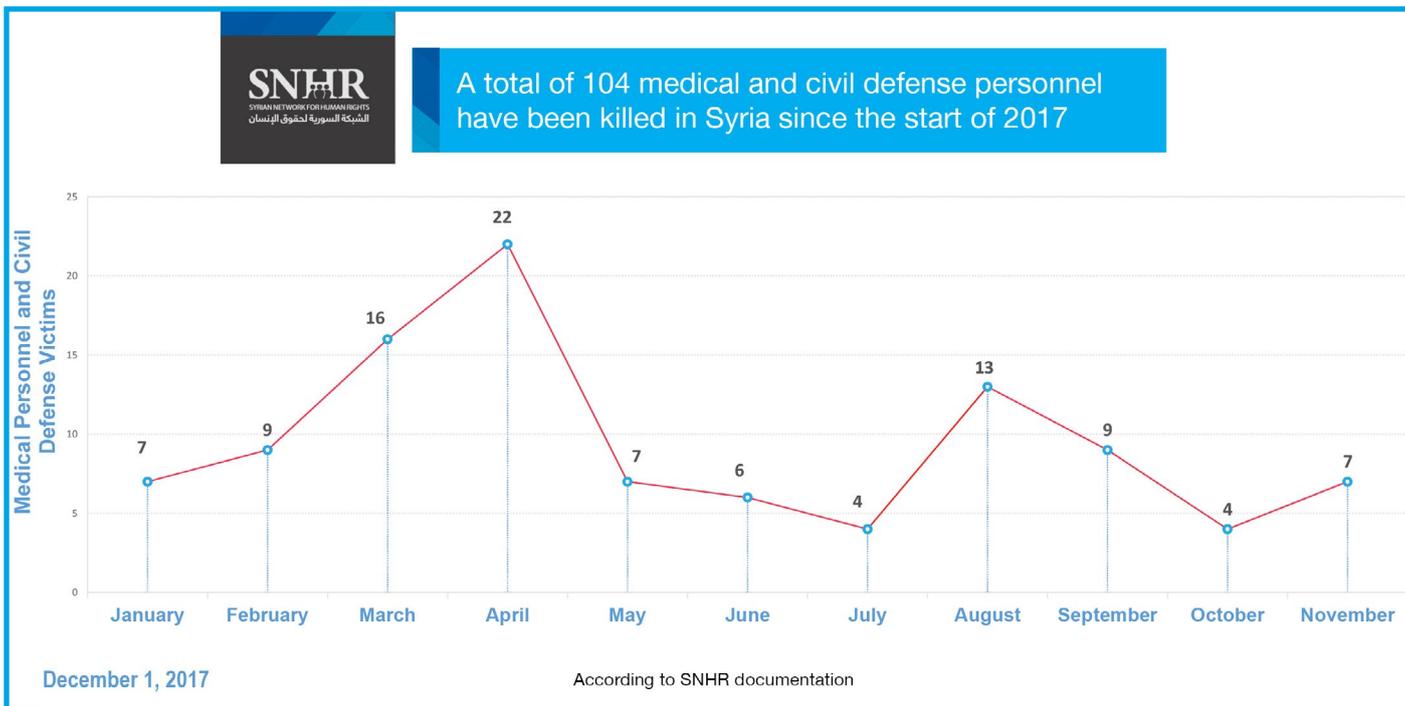
This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't cover the social, economic, and psychological ramifications.



II. Executive Summary

A. Victims among medical personnel and civil defense personnel since the start 2017

SNHR has documented the killing of 104 medical personnel and civil defense personnel at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2017 and December of the same year.

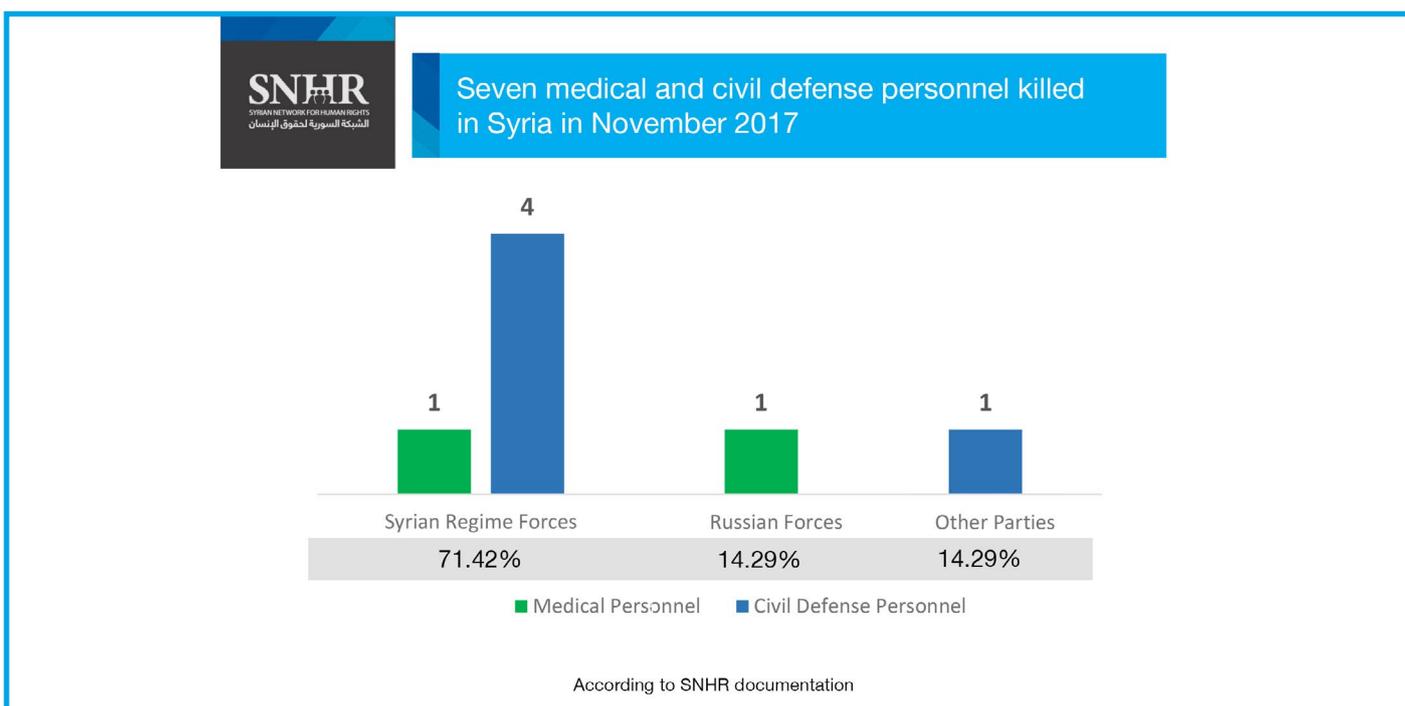


B. Toll of Violations in November 2017

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

- Acts of killing

We documented the killing of seven medical and civil defense personnel



As follows:

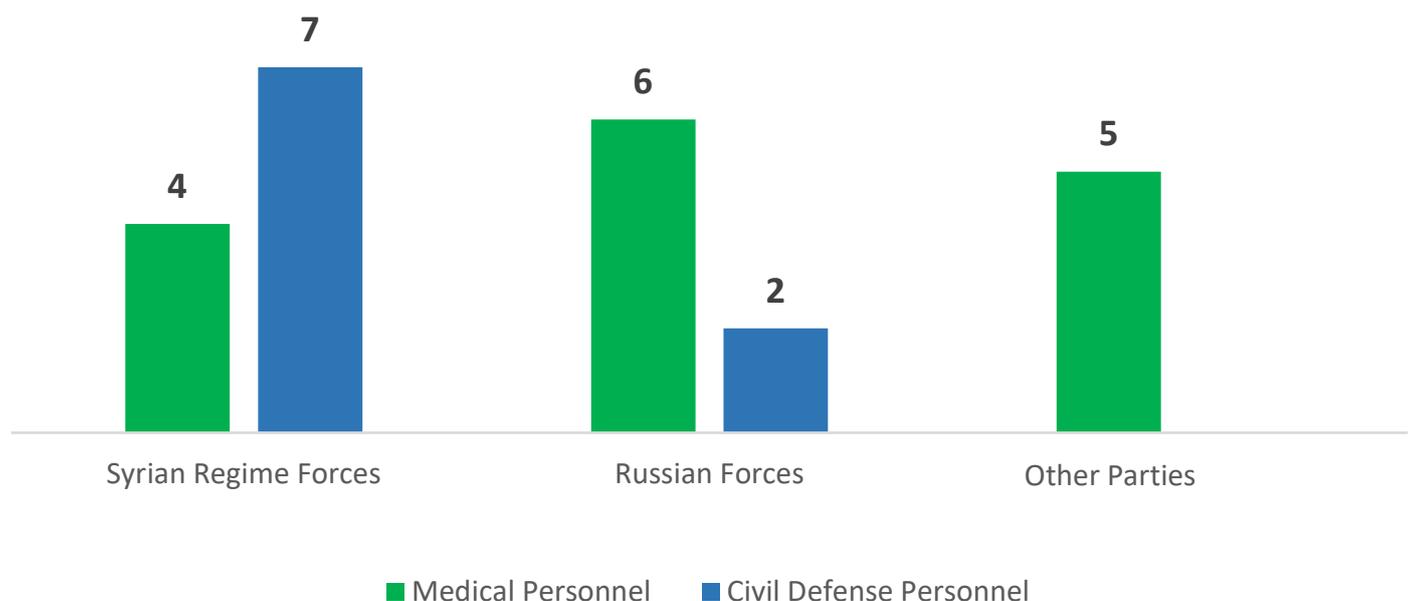
- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): 5, divided into:
 - One paramedic
 - Four civil defense personnel
- Russian forces: 1 medical personnel
- Other parties: 1 civil defense personnel

- Targeting vital medical and civil defense facilities

SNHR has documented 24 incidents of attack on vital medical facilities and civil defense facilities, as follows

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): 11 incidents of attack, as follows:
 - Four medical facilities
 - Seven civil defense facilities
- Russian forces: 8 attacks, as follows:
 - Six medical facilities
 - Two civil defense facilities
- Other parties: 5 attacks on vital facilities

Distribution of Attacks on Vital Medical and Civil Defense Facilities by the Parties to the Conflict in November 2017



III. Details

A. Acts of killing

- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)

Ahmad Jumaa, known as Abu Shahin, paramedic from al Eteiba town, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, 22-year-old, worked at al Anwar Hospital in al Marj area, Eastern Ghouta. He was killed on Wednesday, November 15, 2017, in a shelling by Syrian regime forces rocket launchers that targeted Saqba city, Eastern Ghouta.

Mohammad Ghaleb Haymour, a civil defense member at the civil defense's center 250 in Douma city, from Douma city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1988, has a high school diploma, married and a father of two. He was killed on Friday, November 17, 2017, at around 15:00, in a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes that fired a missile in the middle of Douma city as he was tending to the wounded from a previous shelling.



Mohammad Haymour

Mohammad Mahmoud Alaya, a team leader at the civil defense's center 250 in Douma city, from Douma city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born on 1975, married and a father of four. He was killed on Friday, November 17, 2017, at around 15:00, in a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes that fired a missile in the middle of Douma city as he was tending to the wounded from a previous shelling.



Mohammad Alaya



Ahmad Ibrahim Ka'ka, a civil defense member at the civil defense's center 250 in Douma city, from Douma city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1991, married. He was killed on Friday, November 17, 2017, at around 15:00, in a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes that fired a missile in the middle of Douma city as he was tending to the wounded from a previous shelling.



Alaa al Din Juha, a civil defense member, from Joubar neighborhood, eastern Damascus city, 23-year-old. He was killed on Sunday, November 19, 2017, at around 17:00 in a shelling by Syrian regime forces rocket launchers that targeted the middle of Hamouriya town, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, as he was tending to the wounded from a previous shelling.



- Russian forces

Omar Ahmad Mustafa, [medical laboratory scientist](#), from Kafr Karmin village, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, has a degree from the Medical Institute, born in 1972, married and a father of five. He was killed on Monday, November 13, 2017, in a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian that fired missiles at the local market in al Atareb city, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which resulted in a massacre.

- Other parties

Wael Omar al Omar, director of the awareness section at the [civil defense](#) in Idlib governorate, from Kafr Nobbol city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, 30-year-old. He was killed on Wednesday, November 22, 2017, as gunmen shot him twice at the heart and neck on the main road near Shalakh village, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. As of this writing, we haven't been able to determine the group who killed him.



B. Targeting vital medical and civil defense facilities

We are going to shed light on the most notable attacks on vital medical and civil defense facilities

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

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Wednesday, November 8, 2017, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a [number of missiles](#) at [Farha Center for Physical Therapy](#) and Rehabilitation in the middle of [Saqba](#) city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. The center building was partially destroyed, and its equipment were moderately damaged, as the center was temporarily rendered out of commission. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Monday, November 20, 2017, around 15:00, Syrian regime forces rocket launchers fired no less than nine surface-to-surface rockets that targeted the center of [Kafr Batna](#) town, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. Most of the rockets landed near [al Kahf Hospital](#), known as al Sel Hospital, which is the only hospital in town, which resulted in a massacre. Additionally, the hospital building was partially destroyed, and its equipment were heavily damaged, as the hospital was rendered out of commission. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Civil defense facilities

Thursday, November 9, 2017, around 14:30, Syrian regime artillery fired a shell near an [ambulance belonging](#) to the civil defense's center 114 in the middle of [al Nashabiya](#) town, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. Some of the glass windows on the ambulance were shattered and its structure was [moderately damaged](#). The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Wednesday, November 15, 2017, around 16:30, Syrian regime forces rocket launchers fired a rocket loaded with cluster submunitions that landed in the middle of Saqba city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. Some of the submunitions exploded [near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense](#), with no damages recorded to the vehicle. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Saturday, November 18, 2017, around 03:30, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes [fired one missile](#) that landed near an ambulance belonging to the civil defense's center 90 in the middle of [Madyara](#) village, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. One of the civil defense members was wounded. In addition, the ambulance was [heavily damaged](#) and rendered out of commission. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

- Russian forces

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Monday, November 13, 2017, around 15:00, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired [one missile](#) that landed [near the clinical center](#), which is affiliated to Doctors Without Borders, in [al Atareb](#) city, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which [resulted in a massacre](#). Additionally, the center building and its equipment were [heavily damaged](#), as the center was temporarily [rendered out of commission](#). The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Destruction in the aftermath of a bombing by Syrian regime forces near a clinical center, affiliated to Doctors Without Borders, in al Atareb city, Aleppo – November 13, 2017



Civil defense facilities

Monday, November 6, 2017, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired one missile [near the civil defense team](#) -Talmennes center- in [Ma'r Shmarin village](#), southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, as the team was heading to examine an attack site from a previous bombing by the same warplanes. An ambulance and [two evacuation vehicles](#) for the team were heavily damaged, as they were rendered out of commission. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

- Other parties

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Sunday, November 26, 2017, an IED planted by gunmen exploded inside [an ambulance belonging to Syria Relief and Development \(SRD\)](#) in front of [al Helal Hospital](#) in [Ma'aret Misreen](#) town, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The ambulance structure was heavily damaged as it was rendered out of commission. We didn't record any damages to the hospital building. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the group behind the bombing. The town was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Damages in the aftermath of an IED explosion of unknown source inside an SDF ambulance in Ma'aret Misreen town, Idlib – November 26, 2017



IV. Conclusions and Recommendation

Legal conclusions

1- The incidents mentioned in this report are considered, beyond any doubt, violations of Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, these incidents are violations of Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.

2- We can confirm that most of the incidents included in this report have targeted armless civilians. Therefore, Syrian regime forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which amount to a war crime where all elements were fulfilled. Also, Russian forces and other parties have committed acts that amount to war crimes through the crime of extrajudicial killing or targeting vital civilian facilities.

3- The attacks mentioned in this report are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at populated areas rather than a specific military object.

4- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, and significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Recommendations

The Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps as it has been more than two years since Resolution 2139 was adopted and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombardment operations have been made. All the conflict parties must respect these steps and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in committing war crimes have been proven.
- Instill security and peace in Syria and implement the norm of the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect the lives, culture, and history of the Syrian people from being destroyed, stolen, and ruined.
- Expand the sanctions to include the Syrian and Iranian regimes and all of their pillars who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.



The International Community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, Steps must be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect them from the daily killings and siege and enhance the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction must be activated in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in tens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were drought out. Therefore, steps under Article 7 of the Rome Statute must be taken and the norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, must be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights council and work on utilizing the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

The Russian guarantor

- The Syrian regime has to be stopped from dooming the de-escalation agreements. Otherwise, it will only be seen as an exchange of roles between the Russian regime, on one side, and the Syrian/Russian alliance on the other side.
- Start making progress in the detainees issue by revealing the fates of 76,000 forcibly-disappeared persons at the hands of the Syrian regime.

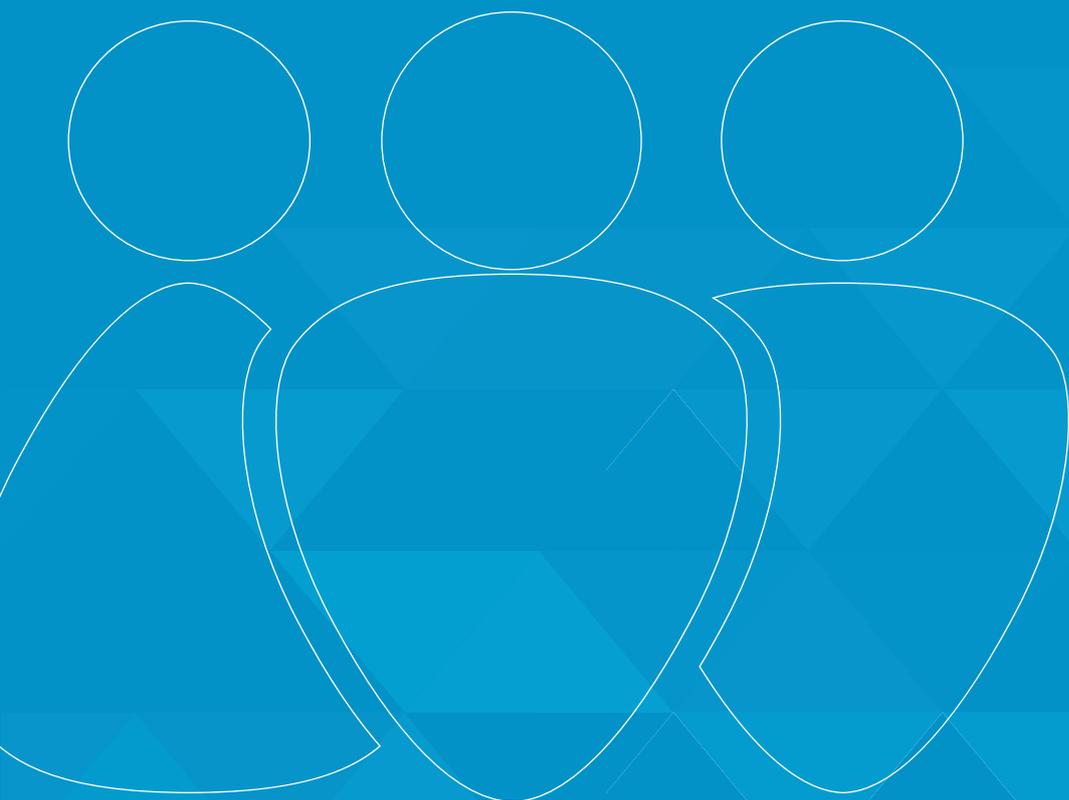
Medical organizations around the world

There is a severe shortage in medical manpower in Syria because of the ceaseless killing of medical personnel. Firstly, Syrian doctors must come back to Syria to compensate for the severe shortage in medical personnel. Also, international organizations can send volunteers to safe areas where wounded are sent for treatment. We have recorded many cases where wounded died due to lack of medical resources.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most sincere thanks go to the victims' families and friends and to the local activists who contributed majorly to this report.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

