

112 Medical, Civil Defense, and Red Crescent Personnel Killed, and 243 Attacks on Their Vital Facilities in Syria in 2017

Six Medical and Civil Defense
Personnel Killed, and
12 Attacks on Their Vital
Facilities in December

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Saturday, January 6, 2018

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 Filaq 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.



Methodology

SNHR's high-level methodology for documentation relies on collecting direct accounts from survivors or victims' families and local media activists, as this report includes one account, 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.

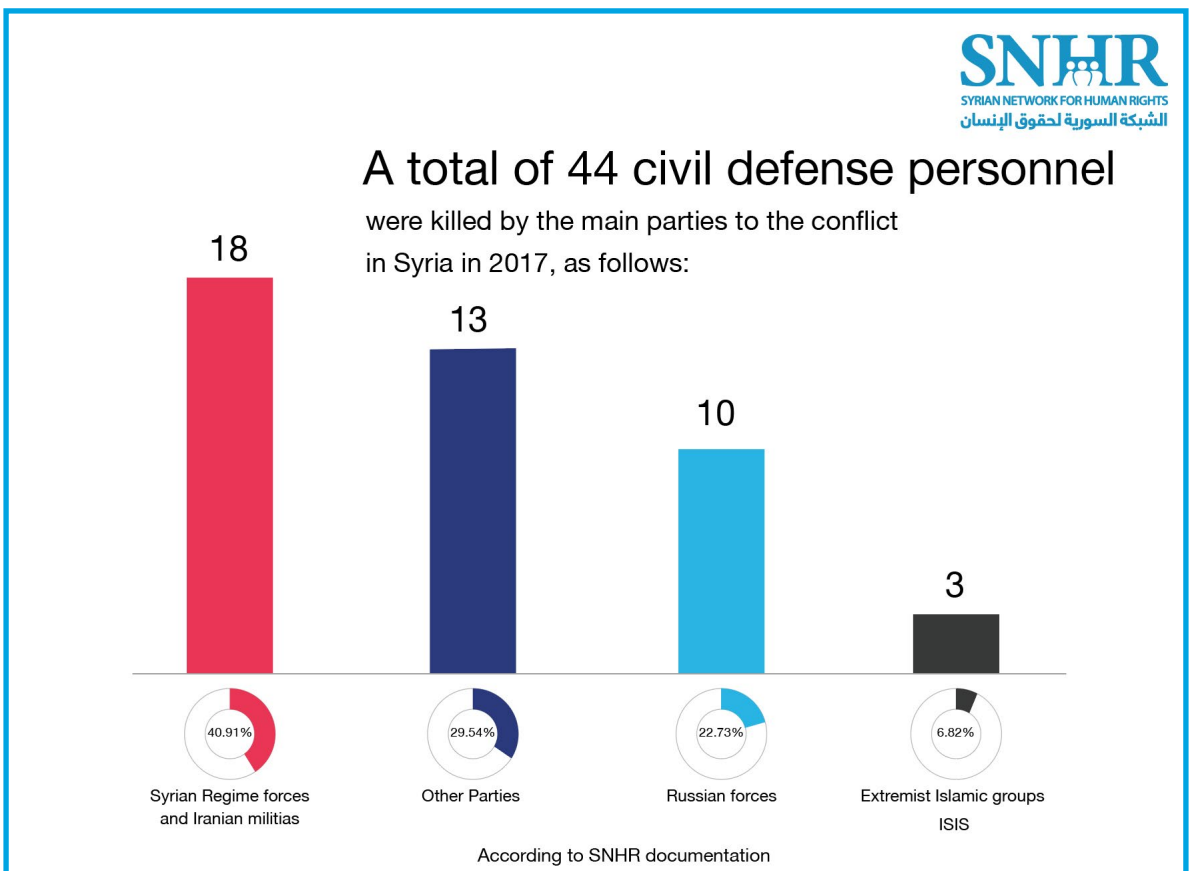
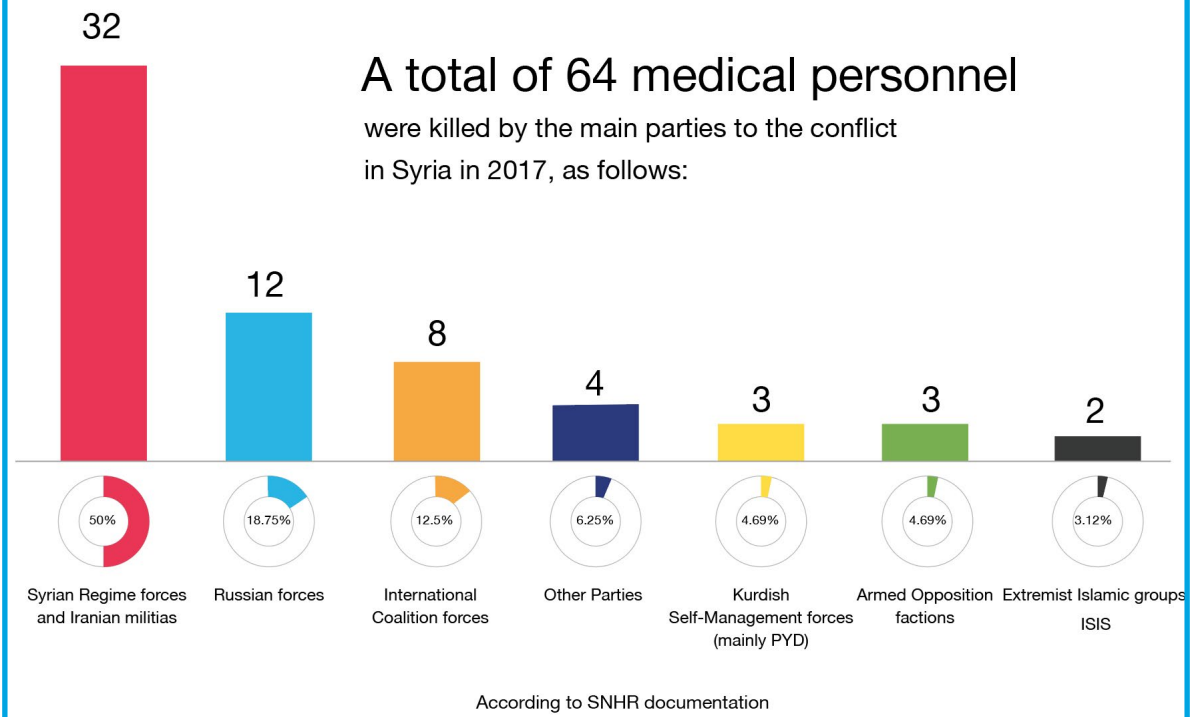
II.Executive Summary

A. Most notable violations in 2017

- Acts of killing

We have documented the killing of 112 medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel in 2017





Distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): killed 51, including two women (adult female), medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel, as follows:

- Two doctors
- 12 nurses, including two women
- 11 paramedics
- Two pharmacists
- One Red Crescent personnel
- 18 civil defense personnel
- Five medical personnel

- Russian forces: killed 23, including three women (adult female), medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel as follows:

- One doctor
- Five nurses, including one woman
- Three pharmacists, including one woman
- One Red Crescent personnel
- 10 civil defense personnel
- Three medical personnel, including one woman

- Extremist Islamic groups:

ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): killed five medical and civil defense personnel, as follows:

- Two doctors
- Three civil defense personnel

- Armed opposition factions: killed three medical personnel, as follows

- One doctor
- One paramedic
- One medical personnel

- Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): killed three medical personnel, as follows:

- Two doctors
- One pharmacist



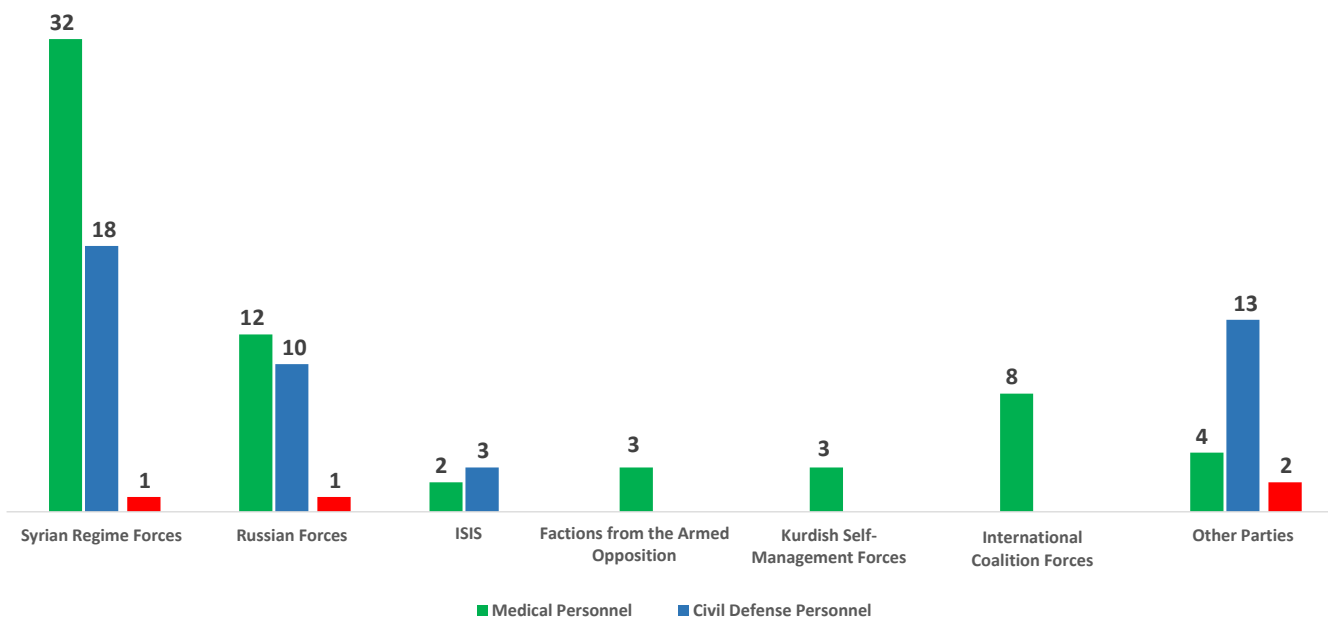
- International coalition forces: killed eight medical personnel, including one woman, as follows:

- Five doctors
- One female nurse
- Two pharmacists

- Other parties: killed 19 medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel, as follows:

- One doctor
- One nurse
- One paramedic
- Two Red Crescent personnel
- 13 civil defense personnel
- One medical personnel

Toll of victims among medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent personnel is distributed by perpetrator party as follows:



-Attacks on vital facilities

SNHR has documented 243 attacks on vital medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent facilities, distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: 117 attacks, as follows:

- 37 attacks on medical facilities
- 18 attacks on ambulances
- Three attacks on Red Crescent facilities
- 59 attacks on civil defense facilities

- Russian forces: 92 attacks, as follows:

- 47 attacks on medical facilities
- 16 attacks on ambulances
- One attack on a Red Crescent facility
- 28 attacks on civil defense facilities

- Armed opposition factions: three attacks, as follows:

- One attack on a medical facility
- One attack on an ambulance
- One attack on a Red Crescent facility

- Self-Management forces: two attacks on medical facilities

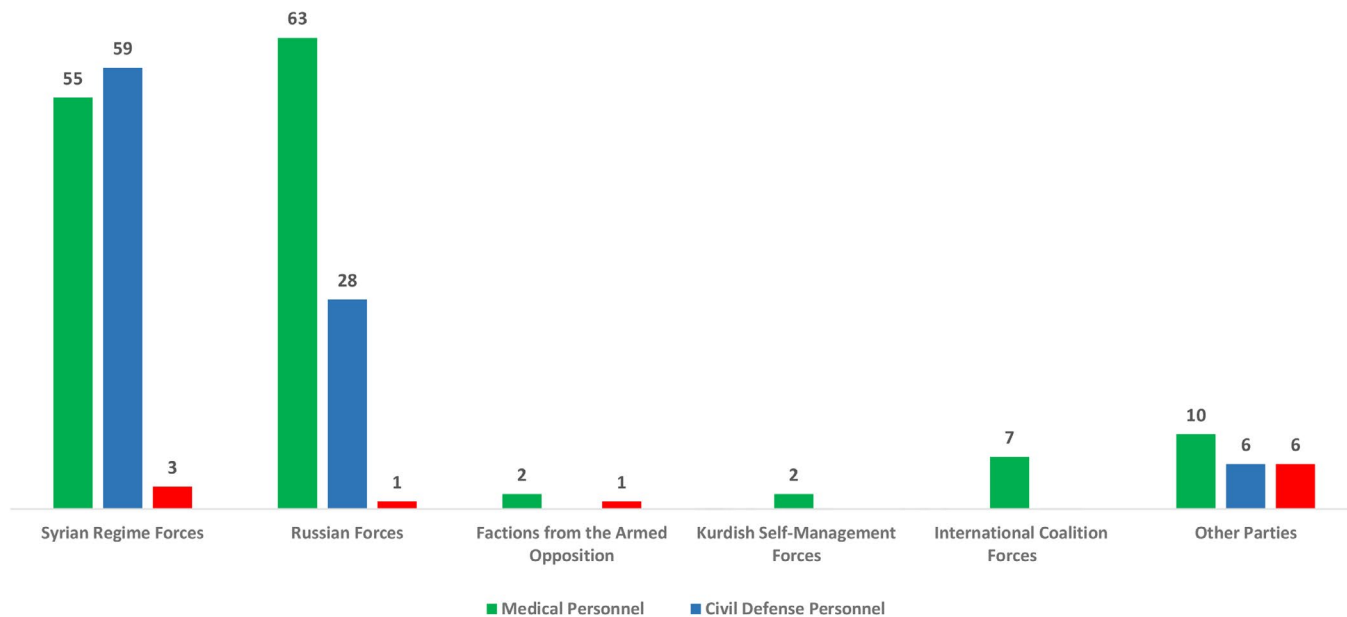
- International coalition forces: seven attacks on medical facilities

- Other parties: 22 attacks, as follows:

- Seven attacks on medical facilities
- Three attacks on ambulances
- Six attacks on Red Crescent facilities
- Six attacks on civil defense facilities



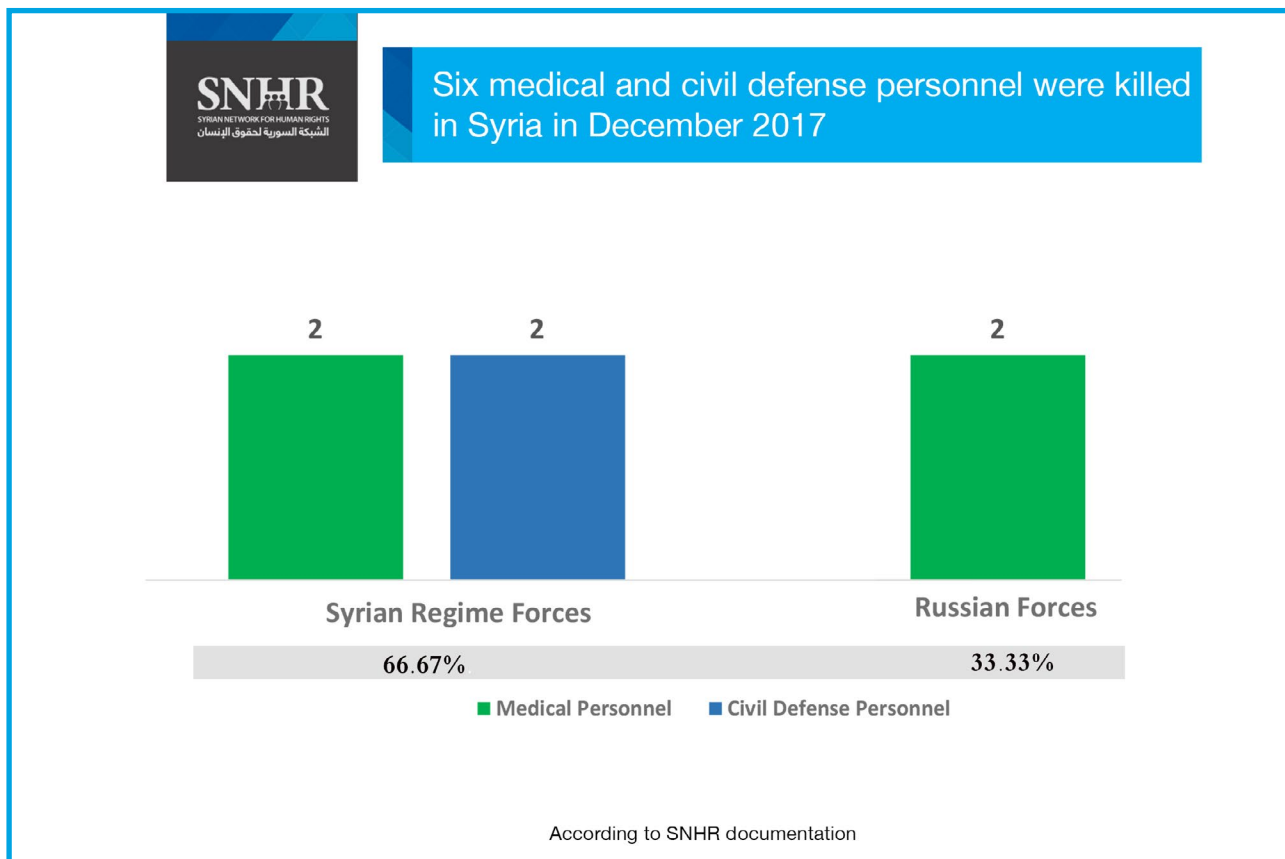
Attacks on vital medical, civil defense, and Red Crescent facilities are distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:



B. Most notable violations in December 2017

- Acts of killing

We documented the killing of six medical and civil defense personnel



As follows:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): four, divided into:

- Two nurses
- Two civil defense personnel

- Russian forces: two, including one woman, divided into:

- One doctor
- One nurse (woman)

- Attacks on vital medical and civil defense facilities

SNHR has documented 12 attacks on vital medical facilities, civil defense, and Red Crescent facilities, as follows:

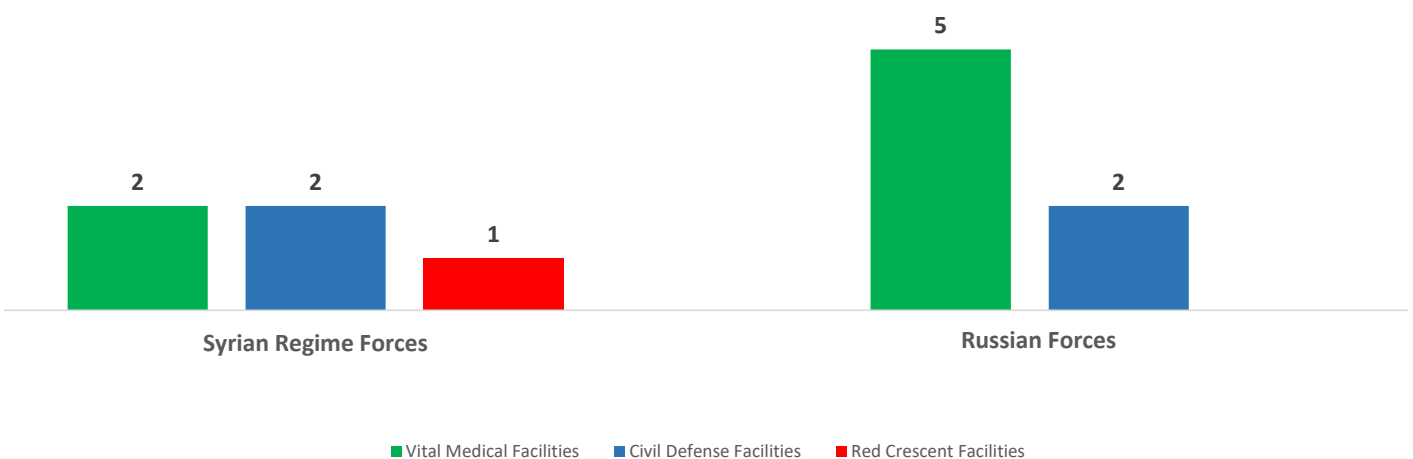
- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): five attacks, as follows:

- Two attacks on medical facilities
- Two attacks on civil defense facilities
- One attack on a Red Crescent facility

- Russian forces: seven attacks, as follows:

- Three attacks on medical facilities
- Two attacks on ambulances
- Two attacks on civil defense facilities

Distribution of Attacks on Medical, Civil Defense, and Red Crescent Facilities by the Perpetrator Party in December 2017



III. Details

A. Acts of killing

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

Bashar Dado, [a civil defense personnel](#), from Khan Sheikhoun city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1990, worked as an ambulance driver for Khan Sheikhoun city. He was killed on Tuesday, December 26, 2017, in a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes who fired a missile near al Rahma Hospital and the civil defense center of Khan Sheikhoun as he was scouting a previous attack site.



Ghazi Abdul Rahman al Bakkour, [nurse](#), from Taldao city, northwestern suburbs of Homs governorate, born in 1964, received a certificate in nursing from the Ministry of Interior for formerly volunteering, as a cop, in forensics, worked at Taldao Makeshift Hospital, married and a father of eight (five daughters and three sons). He was killed on Thursday, December 28, 2017, by shrapnel that inflicted his heart and lower limbs following an artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces who fired a mortar shell at the public road in Taldao city.



Abdullah Ahmad al Sheikh, [a civil defense personnel](#), in the civil defense center of Bdama town, from Bdama town, which is administratively a part of Jisr al Shoghour, western suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was killed on Thursday, December 28, 2017, in a shelling by Syrian regime rocket launchers on Bdama town as he was scouting a previous attack site.



Omran al Shayeb, [nurse](#), from al Iteiba village, Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1991, worked at Nabd al Marej Hospital, married and a father of one. He was [killed](#) on Saturday, December 30, 2017, in a missile bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes on Harasta city, Eastern Ghouta, as he was tending to the wounded from a previous bombing.

- Russian forces

Zahra Hussein Jablawi, female nurse, from Kafr Noran village, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, 22-year-old, student at Omar ben Abdul Aziz Nursing Institute, worked as nurse at Kafr Noran Health Center. She was killed on Monday, November 13, 2017, in a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired missiles at the local market in al Atareb city, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which resulted in a massacre. On Thursday, December 7, 2017, we were able to contact activists from the area who confirmed the incident.

Shuja' Yousef al Zarzour, otolaryngologist, from al Boukamal city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, born in 1963, married and a father of five (four sons and one daughter). He [was killed](#) on Thursday, November 23, 2017, in a bombing by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired missiles at the water crossing in Hasrat village, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The bombardment resulted in a massacre. On December 5, 2017, we were able to contact activists from the area who confirmed the incident.

B. 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)

Tuesday, December 26, 2017, two Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs and gas cylinders -the first one dropped two barrel bombs while the second helicopter dropped one barrel bomb and gas cylinders- in front of al Rahma hospital, which is built inside a cave located by the civil defense center in eastern [Khan Sheikhoun](#) city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The hospital building was moderately damaged. It should be noted that fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes (Su-24) carried out an airstrike with one missile on the same site after rescue workers and civil defense personnel gathered, resulting in casualties. Additionally, the hospital building was slightly damaged. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Thursday, December 28, 2017, around 15:00, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired two missiles at the Martyr Hasan al A'raj -known as al Maghara Hospital- which is affiliated to the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) in [Kafr Zita](#) city, northern suburbs of Hama governorate. It should be noted that this airstrike was followed by a second airstrike that was carried out by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian who fired two missiles at the yard of the same hospital. The two airstrikes resulted in moderate damages to the hospital building and an ambulance belonging to the hospital as the hospital and the ambulance were temporarily rendered out of commission. In addition, the power generators in the hospital were heavily damaged. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Civil defense facilities

Saturday noon, December 2, 2017, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a missile [near an ambulance belonging](#) to the [civil defense's center 90](#) in Harasta city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate as its staff were scouting a previous site that [was bombed](#) by the same warplanes. The missile landed 25 meters away from the ambulance, leading to the ambulance's driver losing control and colliding with an ambulance for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Both of the ambulances' structures were damaged to varying degrees. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Damages in the aftermath of a bombing by Syrian regime forces near a civil defense's ambulance in Harasta city, Damascus suburbs – December 2, 2017



- Russian forces

Vital medical facilities

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

Wednesday, December 13, 2017, around 02:00, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired [a missile](#) at the [medical point](#) to the west of Um al Amd village, which is administratively a part of Tal al Daman county, southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The medical point was [heavily destroyed](#) and its equipment were [heavily damaged](#) as it was rendered out of commission. It should be noted that the medical point uses the former Agriculture Institution building as a base. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Damages in the aftermath of a bombing we believe was Russian on the medical point in Um al Amd village, Aleppo – December 13, 2017

We contacted Ramadan Hasan al Mohammad¹, a member of the civil defense center in Barda village. Ramadan told us that observatories announced on December 13 that fixed-wing Russian warplanes were soaring in the sky above the village and had carried out an airstrike on Um al Amd village. The observatories notified people to stay put as the warplanes are still in the sky: **“Five minutes later, the warplanes left and I rushed with the civil defense team to the site where I saw a missile that hit directly the medical point building and destroyed it.”**

¹ We contacted him via Facebook



Thursday, December 28, 2017, around 15:00, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired two missiles at the yard of the Martyr Hasan al A'rat Hospital, known as al Maghara hospital, which is affiliated to SAMS in [Kafr Zita](#) city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. This bombardment was followed by another bombardment by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes who fired two missiles at the same hospital. The two airstrikes resulted in moderate damages to the hospital building and an ambulance belonging to the hospital as the hospital and the ambulance were temporarily rendered out of commission. In addition, the power generators in the hospital were heavily damaged. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Civil defense facilities

Thursday, December 14, 2017, around 16:30, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired [a number of missiles](#) at the civil defense's center 119 in southeastern [Morek](#) town, northern suburbs of Hama governorate. The center building was partially destroyed and its furniture and equipment were moderately damaged. It should be noted that the civil defense uses the former post building in Morek town as a base. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

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, ISIS, armed opposition factions, Self-Management forces, international coalition 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 and the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed 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 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 and condolences for to the victims' families and friends and to the local activists who effectively contributed to this report.





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