

The Government Forces Substitute the Use of Chemical Weapons by the Use of Cluster Munitions

The Scope of the Report: Documenting the government forces shelling of Ukairbat in the countryside of Hama with cluster munitions on Monday, February 17 and on Friday, March 14, 2014

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Introduction

Ukairbat is located to the eastern countryside of Hama. The government forces have shelled it repeatedly lately with cluster munitions.

The team of the Syrian Network for Human Rights ([SNHR](#)) has observed the widening use of cluster munitions by the government forces which were encouraged by almost a complete silence by the international community which failed until now in only condemning the government forces for using this weapon which is prohibited according to the International Human Law.

The government forces shelled Yabrud with cluster munitions on January 31 and March 1, 2014. Before that it shelled Keferzita in Hama countryside on February 12, 2014. It seems that the government forces are substituting chemical weapons by cluster munitions.

In this particular case, investigations conducted by [SNHR](#) showed that the area targeted is a civic area and there are no concrete proofs of the existence of rebel fighters in it.

Government forces have used cluster munitions in dozens of areas along 9 governorates, the last of which was during the attacks on Yabrud in the Damascus Countryside. These attacks caused the killing of 138 civilians, among them 64 children (48%) and 14 women (12%). This means that a total of 60% of the victims are women and children, while number of men is 48. Only 3 rebels which were killed which constitutes only 2.5 % of the total victims of the attacks. The real threat of cluster munitions continues to exist even after the attacks as hundreds of submunitions may fail to explode upon impact and might explode in the future when people close them unknowing of their existence, causing them to be killed or injured.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented dozens of cases for people killed or injured in different Syrian governorates because of explosions caused by unexploded cluster submunitions that spread now in suburbs, schools and fields.

Our dear colleagues in Human Rights Watch issued a number of reports that prove the widening use of cluster munitions by the Syrian government forces in its bombing of the Syrian governorates. They could specify – through huge efforts – seven kinds of cluster munitions used. The methodology of the report is based on interviews conducted by the team of **SNHR** with activists and eye witnesses from Hama. The report contains a recorded account of one eye witness. The team of **SNHR** has also checked the pictures and videos provided by activists from the city who cooperate with us. Names of eye witnesses have been changed in the report according to their own wills. **SNHR** couldn't visit the area because of the ban posed by the government forces on human rights organizations.

For more details on the methodology of **SNHR** in documenting victims, please see the following link:

http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR%20methodology.pdf

Details of the Incident

The Syrian government forces shelled Ukairbat two times with cluster munitions since the beginning of 2014. According to the imuth and the dimensions of the rocket, shelling came in the form of a rocket that was fired from Hama military airport; the usual base for shelling the northern countryside with rockets.

Ali is an activist from Ukairbat. He talked to **SNHR** about the incident:

“Two days ago, at about 12 PM we were hit with cluster munitions. This is the second time we are hit with this kind of munitions this year. Shelling came through land to land rocket which was full with big number of cluster bombs. Thank to Allah in both cases rockets fell in agricultural empty areas; hence no victims were recorded.

Our area was many times shelled with cluster munitions since the beginning of shelling on Hama countryside. My area is close to the Syrian desert. There are lots of shepherds who go around with their cattle. Many shepherds and farmers were injured by the cluster submunitions that remained in the ground. Since there is no organization to help us get rid of these submunitions, we have attempted to that ourselves.”

SNHR contacted Dr Abu Anas from Ukairbat, he said:

“Since the beginning of the revolution, our area was five times shelled with cluster munitions, the last of which was in the beginning of 2014. I can’t remember the accurate dates. In the end of February, the regime forces shelled us with rockets that carry cluster bombs. This last shelling was during the night and most of the rockets fell in agricultural areas. Thank to Allah there were no deaths, nor any one was injured.”

Pictures and Attachments

Pictures that document the remains of cluster submunitions left behind the shelling:

The report of **SNHR** about shelling Keferzita with Cluster munitions:

http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/cluster%20bombs%20english.pdf

The Report of **SNHR** about shelling Yabrud with cluster munitions:

http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/Barrel%20Bombs%20Shelled.pdf

Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of cluster munitions by the Syrian government forces is considered a violation of the principles of non-discrimination and equality in the International Human Rights Law and is considered a war crime.

Russian government and other governments must stop supplying the Syrian government with weapons because it is proved now that the Syrian government forces have used these weapons in making crimes against humanity and war crimes that targeted civilian citizens. On the other hand, the friends of the Syrian people must practice real pressure, economically and politically, on the Russian government for this purpose.

The European Union must put more pressure on the Security Council in order that the Syrian

issue is turned into the International Criminal Court.

The United Nations must, from now on, prepare a comprehensive study on the areas hit by the Syrian government with cluster munitions in order to give warnings to the civilians living in these areas. The United Nations must also work quickly on illuminating the unexploded sub-munitions.

Acknowledgments

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