

433 Civilians, Including Two Media Workers and Eight Medical and Civil Defense Personnel, Documented Killed in Syria in July 2019

SNHR Documented 15 Massacres and 28 Persons Who Died due to Torture

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Thursday, August 1, 2019

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 and Methodology
- II. Death Toll of Civilian Victims Documented in July
- III. Death Toll of Victims Who Died due to Torture, and Victims amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel Documented in July
- IV. Record of Most Notable Massacres Documented by SNHR in July
- V. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Introduction and Methodology

The documentation process to register victims killed in Syria is one of the most important roles performed by the Syrian Network for Human Rights since March 2011. This is all the more crucial since murder is the most prevalent of all the violations perpetrated, and the one which most profoundly affects the Syrian people, with families suffering incalculable and irreparable trauma through the loss of fathers, mothers, brothers, friends, etc.

These violations have become widespread, primarily through Syrian regime forces' and affiliated militias' systematic killing of civilians using every kind of weapon. The regime began by using tanks and artillery, then progressed to also deploying warplanes and helicopter gunships which have dropped or fired barrel bombs, in addition to Scud missiles and chemical weapons.

The entry of several parties into the Syrian conflict has increased the importance and complexity of documenting the victims killed in Syria.

Since 2011, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has created complex electronic programs to archive and categorize the victims' data, which the team collects and verifies, enabling us to catalogue the victims according to their gender and the location where each was killed, the governorate from which each victim originally came, and the party responsible for the killing, and to make comparisons between these parties, and identify the governorates which lost the largest proportion of residents.



Since 2011, we have also deemed it appropriate to highlight the death toll among women and children due to the vulnerability of these groups, their central role in the community, and because they give a strong indication of the targeting of civilians. We later added other groups which have played a key role in the popular movement and later in the armed conflict, such as media, medical, relief and civil defense personnel.

Given the importance and sensitivity surrounding the murder of Syrian citizens, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has never stopped issuing daily death toll of victims for nearly eight years, or publishing monthly reports documenting the death toll of victims Syria lost each month, in addition to issuing an annual report, as well as dozens of other reports documenting massacres committed on Syrian soil. Also, SNHR periodically sends a special form to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings.

It should be noted that the United Nations has relied on the Syrian Network for Human Rights for all the statistics it has used in its analysis of victims in the conflict, given SNHR's prominent role as one of the most credible sources. SNHR is also used as a trustworthy source by a large number of Arab and international news agencies and many international human rights organizations.

Methodology

This report records the death toll of victims killed by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria in July 2019, particularly focusing on those victims killed under torture, and victims amongst media and medical personnel, paying particular attention to those massacres which the SNHR was able to document that were committed by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict over the past month.

We should note that in this context we use the term “massacre” to refer to any attack that resulted in the deaths of five or more peaceful individuals in the same incident.

The report also includes an outline of the most notable incidents during this period. Finally, we maintain the full details of every incident on the SNHR database.

The report catalogues the death toll of victims perpetrated by each of the main perpetrator parties in the Syrian conflict. 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 particular attacks to one specific 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 responsible, or it's proved that the attack was a joint initiative carried out in coordination between the two parties.



The main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria are:

- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)
- Russian forces
- Extremist Islamist groups
- Factions of the Armed Opposition
- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic forces (the Democratic Union Party)
- International Coalition forces
- Other parties

Through use of SNHR's extensive database, we can catalogue the victims according to the governorate where they were killed, and also by the governorate from which they originally came. This report catalogues the death toll of victims according to the governorate in which they were killed, rather than by the governorate they originally came from.

In relation to victims amongst armed forces, these are divided into two categories:

- Victims from the armed opposition: We face additional difficulties in assessing these casualties as many of these victims are killed on battlefronts rather than in cities or other urban settlements. We are also often unable to obtain information on the victims such as names, photographs and other important personal details due to the reluctance of armed opposition forces to reveal such sensitive information for security concerns among other reasons. Therefore, the actual number of victims is far higher than the number documented.

- Victims from Syrian Regime force, extremist Islamist groups, and Kurdish Democratic Union Party forces: It is almost impossible to access information about this category of victims and the margin of error is considerably higher than usual due to the lack of any applicable methodology in this type of documentation, since these parties don't publish, reveal, or document information about their casualties. From our perspective and given these facts, it is rational to conclude that the statistics published by some groups concerning casualties amongst this category of victims are fabricated rather than being based on any actual data.

In this report, we record only the toll of civilian casualties - with the exception of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, which includes armed combatants as well as civilians - whose deaths we were able to document during the last month. Some of the victims documented may have been killed months or even years ago, as in some cases of death due to torture; in these cases, where the deaths have only recently been confirmed, we include two dates, the date when we were able to document the victim's death, and the date on which we think the death occurred.



The methodology adopted by the Syrian Network for Human Rights in documenting the victims can be seen at this link¹ .

This report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on information from our extensive network of various sources that has 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. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the scarcity of human and material resources. 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. The Syrian Network for Human Rights also provides [a special form](#) that can be filled in with victims' names and personal information so that the Victims Documentation Department can follow up on this information and verify its accuracy and then include it in the database.

SNHR has analyzed videos and photographs that our team documented, 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, the sites of attacks, and bodies of the victims and the injured, whilst other photos may show the bodies of victims killed under torture, and of 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 and in hard disk backup copies, and we ensure always that all these data are stored with their original source.

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>



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.

This report contains five accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, none of which are cited from any open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided without us offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, and to provide assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias.

Our investigations confirm that all of the attacks included in this report that were carried out by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria targeted civilian areas where we documented no military presence or armories before or during the attacks, and in which the perpetrators failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks as required by international humanitarian law.

The type and level of evidence available varies from one case to another. In light of the aforementioned challenges, the legal definition of many of the incidents documented may be subject to change based on any new evidence or information which emerge after this report is released. We shall update our data archive with any such items of evidence and information as soon as they become available. Meanwhile, although many incidents don't technically constitute a violation of international humanitarian law under the terms of such legislation, they involved collateral damage, so we have recorded and archived these incidents to document what happened historically and to preserve these as part of the national record, although we don't qualify these specific incidents as crimes.

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. Death Toll of Civilian Victims Documented in July

SNHR documented in July 2019 the deaths of 433 civilians, including 119 children and 64 women (adult female), bringing the death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria since the beginning of 2019 up to August 2019 to 2,297.



The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria since the beginning of 2019 was distributed as follows:



2297 civilians were killed in Syria in 2019
From January to August

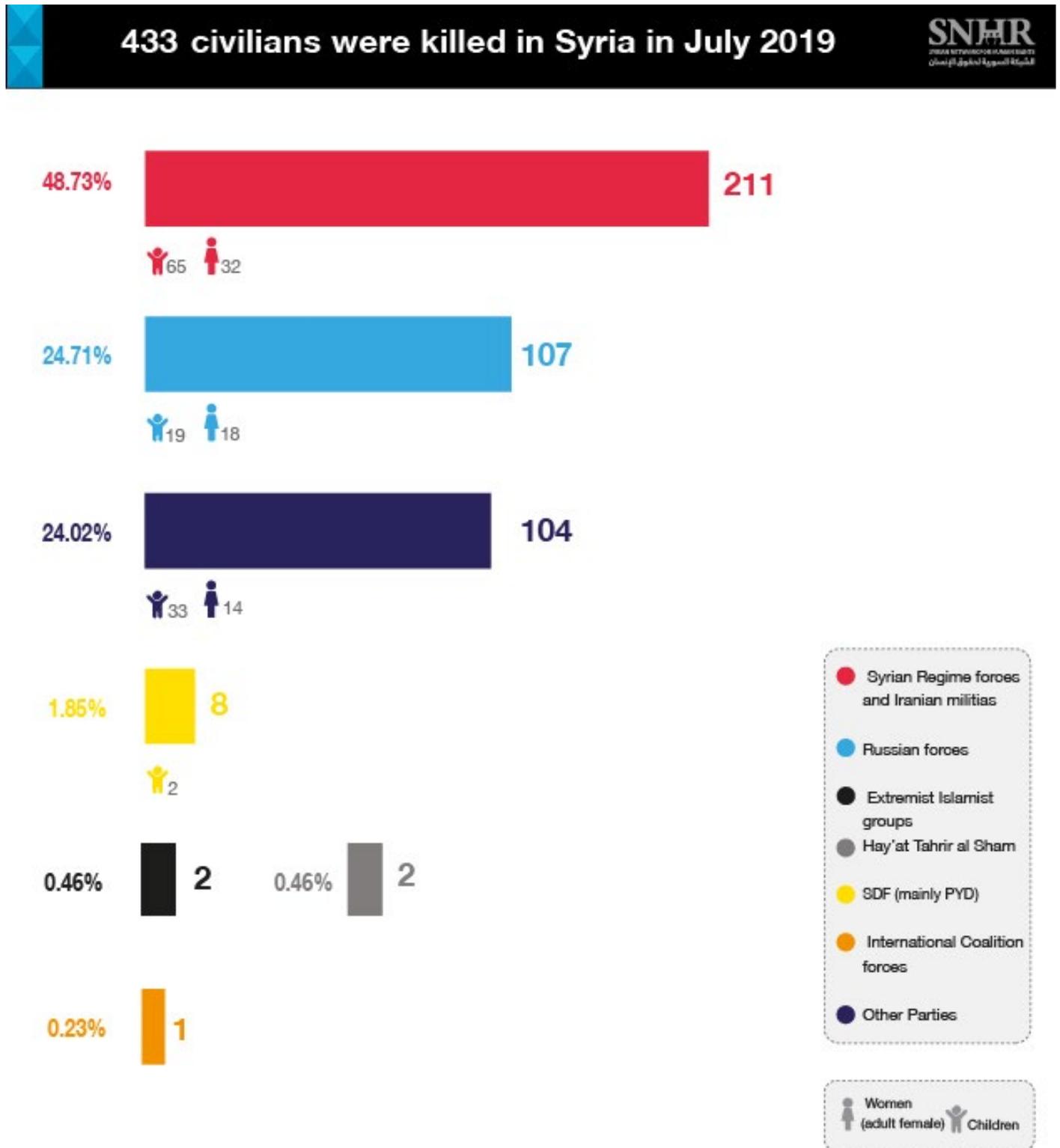


As documented by SNHR

The chart above shows that the highest toll of victims in the first half of 2019 was seen in July, with 69 percent of the toll of victims for this month resulting from attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces following their recent military campaign on the fourth de-escalation zone, which is still ongoing, as it has been since April 26, 2019.



The death toll we documented in July was distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:



As documented by SNHR



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

We documented the deaths of 211 civilians at the hands of Syrian Regime forces, including 65 children (an average of three children per day) and 32 women.

- Russian forces:

We documented the deaths of 107 civilians, including 19 children and 18 women, as a result of bombardment which we believe was by Russian forces.

• **Extremist Islamist groups:** killed two civilians, who died at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition)

- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):

SNHR documented the deaths of eight civilians, including two children.

- International Coalition forces:

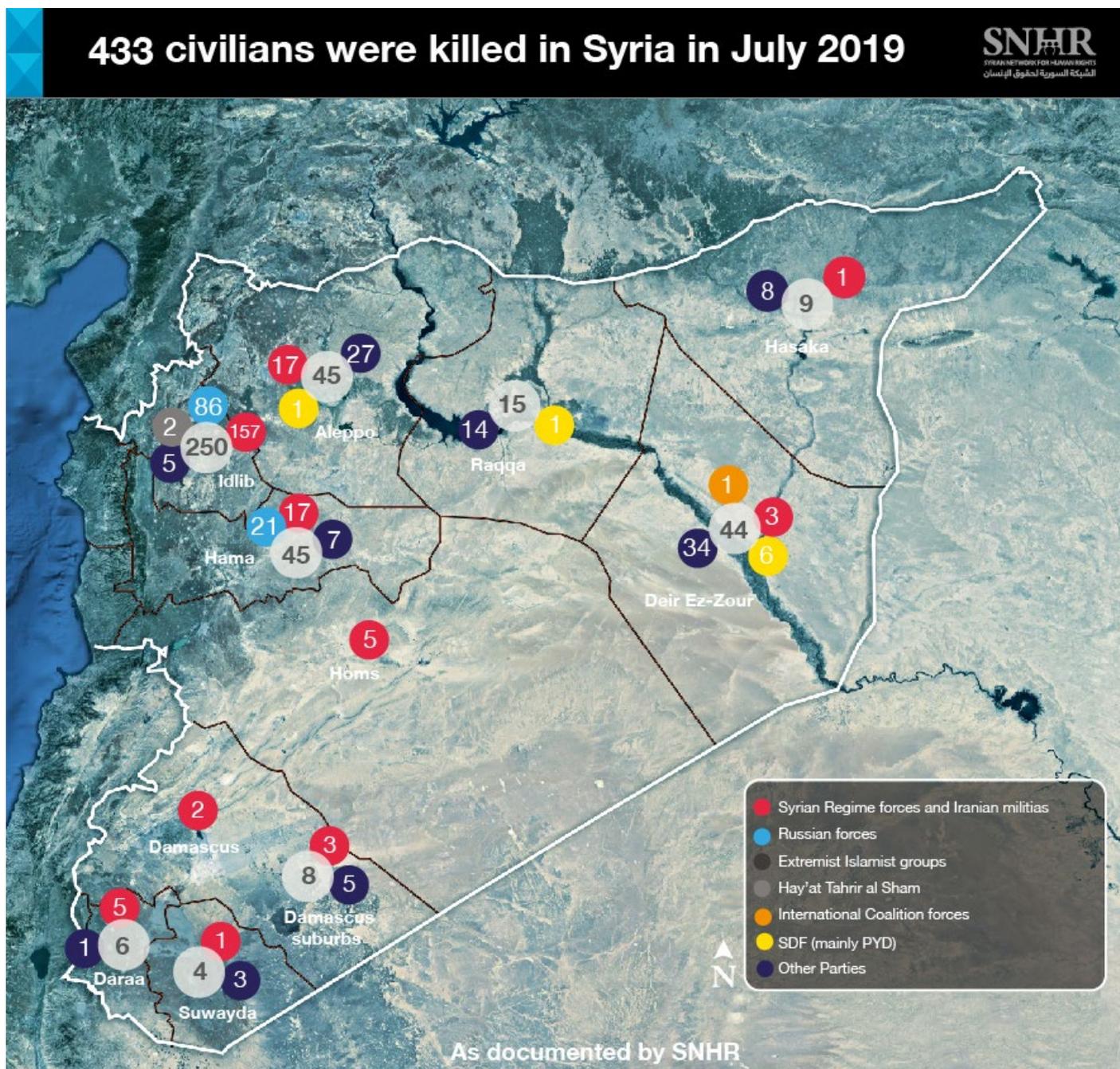
SNHR documented the death of one civilian.

- Other parties:

We documented 104 civilians, including 33 children and 14 women, killed by other parties. Victims in this category include those who were killed in bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified, victims who died in fires of unknown source, victims killed by landmines of unknown origin, and victims who drowned, in addition to victims who died in fires, victims who were killed in indiscriminate shelling by Turkish aerial and land forces, and victims who were killed by Jordanian or Lebanese forces.



The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main perpetrator parties documented in July 2019 was distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



The map above shows that the highest toll of victims in July was in Idlib governorate, which accounted for 58 percent of the civilian victims this month, followed by the governorates of Hama, Aleppo and Deir Ez-Zour with 11 percent each. The military campaign on the fourth de-escalation zone is the leading cause of victims' death this month.



III. Death Toll of Victims Who Died Due to Torture, and Victims Amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel Documented in July

A. Death toll of victims who died due to torture

SNHR documented the deaths of 28 persons due to torture in July 2019, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 25
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Three

The most notable cases are:

[Jamil Tawfiq Qal'aji](#), a university student at the Department of History in the Faculty of Arts at Tishreen University in Latakia, was originally from Hass village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in 2013 in Latakia city. On Wednesday, July 3, 2019, we learned that he had been registered in the Civil Registry Department as having died on Wednesday, February 17, 2016. It is likely that he died due to torture inside a Syrian regime detention center.

[Waddah Mahmoud Sehrij](#), a graduate of the Faculty of Sharia at al Azhar University in Egypt, and a former sharia judge of factions in the Armed Opposition in Aleppo city, from Aleppo city, was born in 1971. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Friday, December 16, 2016, in his place of residence between the neighborhoods of al Kallasa and al Eza'a in Aleppo city. On Tuesday, July 9, 2019, we learned that he had been registered in the Civil Registry Department as having died on Monday, September 18, 2017. It is likely that he died due to torture in a Syrian regime detention center.

Ryad al Khouli, an activist in the popular uprising, from Misraba town in the Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate, was born in 1980. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in April 2018 in Misraba town, and taken to Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Wednesday, July 24, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to torture in Sydnaya Military Prison.



[Ali Badr Hasan al Jajan](#), from al Kassar neighborhood in al Bseira city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on Friday, July 12, 2019, in a raid on his home in al Kassar neighborhood, and was tortured to death in one of their detention centers in al Sabha town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On Wednesday, July 24, 2019, his corpse was handed over to his family bearing signs of torture.

B. Death toll of medical personnel

SNHR documented in July the deaths of five medical personnel, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** One
- **Russian Forces:** Four

The most notable cases are:

[Doctor Mohammad Badr Abdul Baqi](#), a member of the faculty of Academy of Health Sciences of the Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA), from Mhambel town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1983. He obtained a master degree from the Faculty of Nursing - Pediatric Nursing at the University of Alexandria in Egypt in 2010, and continued his medical studies. He died on Monday, July 8, 2019, in a Turkish hospital as a result of wounds sustained on Friday, July 5, 2019, at around 18:00, when fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles that landed near the personal status department building in Mhambel town.



Doctor Mohammad
Badr Abdul Baqi

The [Syrian Expatriate Medical Association](#) published an obituary and tribute to Doctor Mohammad on its official website.

Abdul Basit Mubrak, Suleiman al Yaqoub and Mustafa al Hasan, three of the Kafr Zita Emergency System personnel working with the 'Free' Hama Health Directorate, from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, were killed on Saturday, July 27, 2019, when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles that landed near an ambulance they were driving on the road between Kafr Zita city and al Latamena town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, as they were heading to aid those wounded in earlier bombing of the area by Syrian-Russian alliance forces.



[Abdul Basit Mubrak](#), an ambulance [driver](#), was born in 1985.

[Suleiman al Yaqoub](#), a paramedic and ambulance driver, was born in 1987.

[Mustafa al Hasan](#), a [paramedic](#), was born in 1987.



Abdul Basit Mubrak, Suleiman al Yaqoub and Mustafa al Hasan

C. Death toll of media workers

SNHR documented in July the deaths of two media workers, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** One died due to torture.
- **Russian Forces:** One

The most notable cases are:

On Sunday, July 21, 2019, [the media activist Anas Abdul Majid al Dyab](#) died of [wounds caused](#) by multiple [shrapnel injuries](#) to most of [his body](#) as [a result of bombardment](#) by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, when they fired missiles at al Gharbi al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was with the Civil Defense teams inspecting a site in the neighborhood previously bombed by the same warplanes.

Anas, a photographer for the Khan Sheikhoun Center of Civil Defense, from Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1997. Anas, who was single and held a secondary school certificate, had been injured several times before; one of these injuries was sustained in the chemical attack carried out by the Syrian regime on al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city on April 4, 2017.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) published an obituary and tribute to Anas on their official account on Twitter.



The SNHR contacted media worker Ayham al Bayyoush², a friend of Anas, who quoted to us what Anas's colleague, who was accompanying him when he was fatally injured, said: **“On Sunday, July 21, Russian warplanes launched several raids on al Gharbi al Shamali neighborhood of Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. While Anas was with his team at one of the sites that was bombed, inspecting the place and documenting what happened, a missile fell near him fired by the same warplanes. Shrapnel hit several places in Anas’ body, and he was immediately taken to Bab al Hawa Hospital near the Syrian-Turkish borders, but unfortunately he died before he arrived at the hospital.”** Ayham added that two other Civil Defense members were also injured in the bombardment.



The funeral of media activist Anas al Dyab, who died in a Russian air attack on Khan Sheikhoun city, Idlib - July 21, 2019

² Via his personal account on Facebook on July 22, 2019



On Sunday, June 26, 2016, Syrian Regime forces arrested media activist [Alaa Nayef al Khader al Khaledi](#) as he passed through one of the regime checkpoints at the entrance to al Qtaifa city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, while he was on his way from Douma city in the Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate to Idlib city. On Friday, July 12, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to torture in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. Alaa, known as Wisam al Dimashqi, the media activist, from Bab al Drieb neighborhood in Homs city, was born in 1992.



Alaa Nayef
al Khader al Khaledi

Alaa's brother, Mohammad al Khader al Khaledi³, told us: **“On Sunday, June 26, 2016, Syrian Regime forces arrested Alaa in al Qtaifa area while he was accompanied by a colleague named Yamen on their way from Douma to Idlib. Yamen managed to run away, while we were unable to visit or even know the whereabouts of Alaa during his detention. On Friday, July 12, 2019, a lawyer whom we had already commissioned in advance to follow up the case of my brother Alaa told us that an officer of the Syrian Regime forces had assured him that Alaa had died in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, but he was unable to know the date of death or obtain a statement to prove it.”**

D. Death toll of Civil Defense personnel

SNHR documented the deaths of three Civil Defense personnel in July 2019, all at the hands of Russian forces

³ Via his personal account on Facebook on July 16, 2019



The most notable cases are:

[Mahmoud Mohammad al Ali](#), a member of Civil Defense- Kafr Zita Center, from al Traimsa village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, was married with children. He was killed along with his daughter when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at his residence within the housing units allocated to the IDPs north of Ma'aret Harma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) published an obituary and tribute to Mahmoud on their official account on Twitter.



Mahmoud al Ali

[Amir al Benni](#), a member of Civil Defense- Ma'aret al Numan Center, from Ifra village which is administratively a part of Wadi Barada in Western Ghouta in the west of Damascus Suburbs governorate, was married with two children. He was killed on Monday, July 22, 2019, in a double-tap attack by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, when the planes fired missiles at a street at one end of the vegetables market in the center of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was aiding the victims of previous bombing by the same warplanes.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) mourned Amir on their official account on Twitter.



Amir al Benni

IV. Record of Most Notable Massacres Documented by SNHR in July

SNHR documented at least 74 massacres since the beginning of 2019, including 15 massacres in July, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Nine
- **Russian forces:** Three
- **Other parties:** Three

The massacres perpetrated by Syrian Regime forces in July all took place in areas under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.



According to the SNHR's Victim Documentation team, the massacres documented this month resulted in the deaths of 146 civilians, including 50 children (32 males ,18 females) and 25 women (adult female). This means that 52 percent of all the victims were women and children, a very high proportion, and a clear indication that civilian residents were specifically targeted in most of these massacres.

The death toll of these massacres was distributed by the perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 66 civilians, including 25 children (17 male and eight females) and 14 women.
- **Russian forces:** 57 civilians, including 14 children (seven males and seven females) and 10 women.
- **Other parties:** 23 civilians, including 11 children (eight males and three females) and one woman.

The most notable cases are:

On Sunday, July 7, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used artillery to fire a number of shells at agricultural land in an area situated between the villages of Qastoun and al Sahen in Idlib governorate's western suburbs, which resulted in the deaths of [six civilians](#) from one family, including four women, who were working on the agricultural land at the time. We note that Qastoun village is located in Hama governorate's western suburbs, while al Sahen village is located in Idlib governorate's western suburbs. 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.

On Tuesday, July 9, 2019, a landmine planted in [Dablan](#) village which is administratively a part of al Ashara city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate exploded, resulting in the deaths of seven male children from two families, and injuring four others. We were unable to identify the party responsible for planting the landmine up to the time of publishing this report. Dablan village was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, July 21, 2019, fixed-wing (SU-24) Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles that landed [in front of al Eman Mosque](#) in al Karaj area in the middle of Urm al Jawz village in Idlib governorate's southern suburbs, [which resulted in the deaths of ten civilians](#), including [three children \(two males and one female\)](#) and one woman, and injured 22 others. 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.





Recovering a victim of a massacre perpetrated by Syrian Regime forces in Urm al Jouz town, Idlib – July 21, 2019

We spoke with Mr. Loay Mustafa Sahloul⁴, a village resident who owns a shop in al Karaj area opposite al Eman Mosque, near the site of the massacre. He told us: “ **At around 12 pm, I went out of the shop towards my house, which is about 300 meters away. Suddenly, violent explosions rocked the village, after which I heard a powerful sound of warplanes in the air, which the observatories had reported as belonging to the Syrian regime. I went back to the highway and went to the site of the shelling immediately. Fires were breaking out everywhere and the destruction was indescribable. I saw many people cut by shrapnel and burned and dozens of injured among pedestrians and shop owners. Shops were demolished on top of their owners. One of the damaged houses, which I was able to recognize, was Ahmad Kharfan’s house, in addition to three other houses sheltering IDPs from Hama and Damascus Suburbs. I know most of the victims because they are my neighbors. My cousins and their mother were also injured in the bombing, and were taken to a hospital in Ariha city. When I went to visit them in the hospital, they told me that the hospital received six more victims who were killed in the same attack, in addition to about twenty wounded.** “ Loay told us that the same warplanes had carried out an air raid on the village’s middle school just before carrying out the attack near al Karaj area.

⁴ Via WhatsApp on July 26, 2019

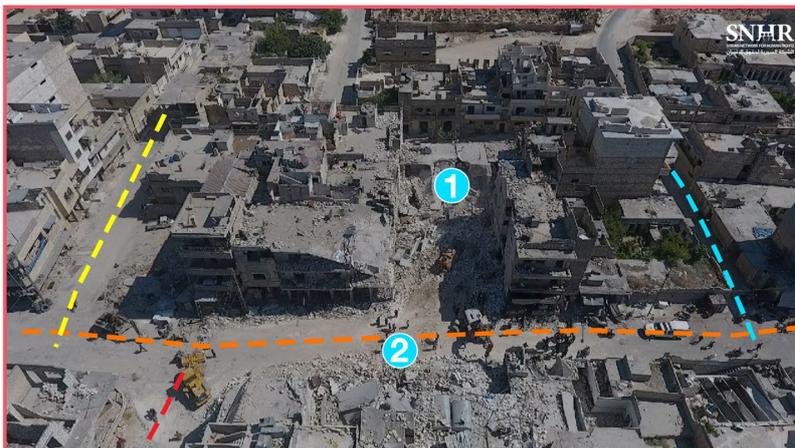


On Monday, July 22, 2019, at around 08:35, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a double attack in the center of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The first attack used a missile to target a group of residential buildings located at one end of the vegetable market, causing several civilian injuries. After about five minutes, when other civilians and Civil Defense personnel had gathered to rescue the injured, one of these warplanes launched a new raid on the same site, with the second missile landing in the middle of the street, about 10 meters from the first one, [resulting in the deaths of 39 civilians, including four children \(one male and three females\) and seven women](#). Among the victims was the Civil Defense personnel member who was engaged in inspecting the site of the first strike. We issued [a report](#) highlighting this massacre.

Map showing the location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019

SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019



- 1 Location of the first Russian attack
- 2 Location of the second Russian attack which resulted in a massacre
- 3 Location of the third Russian attack
- 4 Location of the fourth Russian attack
- 1 Location of the first Syrian attack
- 2 Location of the second Syrian attack



The SNHR also spoke with Obada Zekra⁵, the Director of the Civil Defense Center in Ma'aret al Numan city, who went to the site of the massacre to recover the victims and injured. He told us: **“The air observatories and the Civil Defense observation service⁶ provided general information that morning that a Russian warplane has arrived in the airspace of Ma'aret al Numan city after taking off from Khmeimim airbase. Less than a minute later, a violent explosion shook the center of the city. One of the Civil Defense teams headed to the site. The attack took place at the end of the street leading to the vegetable market near a motorcycle repair shop.”**

Obada added that another air raid, also carried out by a Russian warplane, occurred minutes after the first attack, with the missile exploding 10 meters away from him, causing the largest number of casualties: **“ The majority of the victims of the second attack were civilians who rushed to the site to take part in recovering those injured in the first attack, and one of the Civil Defense members was martyred. We retrieved the bodies of martyrs and the wounded and took them to the medical centers. We also recovered the remains of a person that we could not identify.”** Obada added that the Russian warplane then carried out other air raids in the east of the city, after which Syrian warplanes bombarded the city. He confirmed that the targeted areas were free of any military presence of factions of the Armed Opposition or Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.

On Saturday, July 27, 2019, fixed-wing (MIG-23) Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at neighboring residential buildings in al Gharbi neighborhood of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting in the deaths of 12 civilians, including seven children \(six males and one female\)](#) and two women, in addition to injuring around 27 others with varying injuries. Ariha city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

⁵ Via WhatsApp on July 22, 2019

⁶ A rapid warning system that sends alerts within seconds of aircraft taking off, monitoring the planes' movements and disseminating the information to civilians in coordination with civilian observatories, local benefactors, media outlets and through social media, to help civilians protect themselves before the raids occur.





V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- The evidence we collected indicates that attacks were directed against civilians and civilian objects. The Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes ranging from extrajudicial killings to detention and enforced disappearance. Their attacks and indiscriminate bombardment have resulted in 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 and resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, as well as resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the alliance of International Coalition forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, with the crimes of indiscriminate killing amounting to war crimes.
- Extremist Islamist groups have violated international humanitarian law, causing the deaths of many civilians.



- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mentality intended to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the four Geneva Convention (articles 27, 31, 32).
- 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, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- These attacks, 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 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.

Recommendations:

Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly states that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible 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 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 member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and expose its involvement in this regard.



- Should 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 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 at 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 through 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’ doctrine 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 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. By failing to do so, 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 providing 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.

- Revive 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 government.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and using prohibited 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 people involved accountable.

- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the victims' families, 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 the 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 allow the 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 disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 82,000 people disappeared by the Syrian regime.

The Coalition (International Coalition forces and 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 (which is mainly PYD) 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.

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.

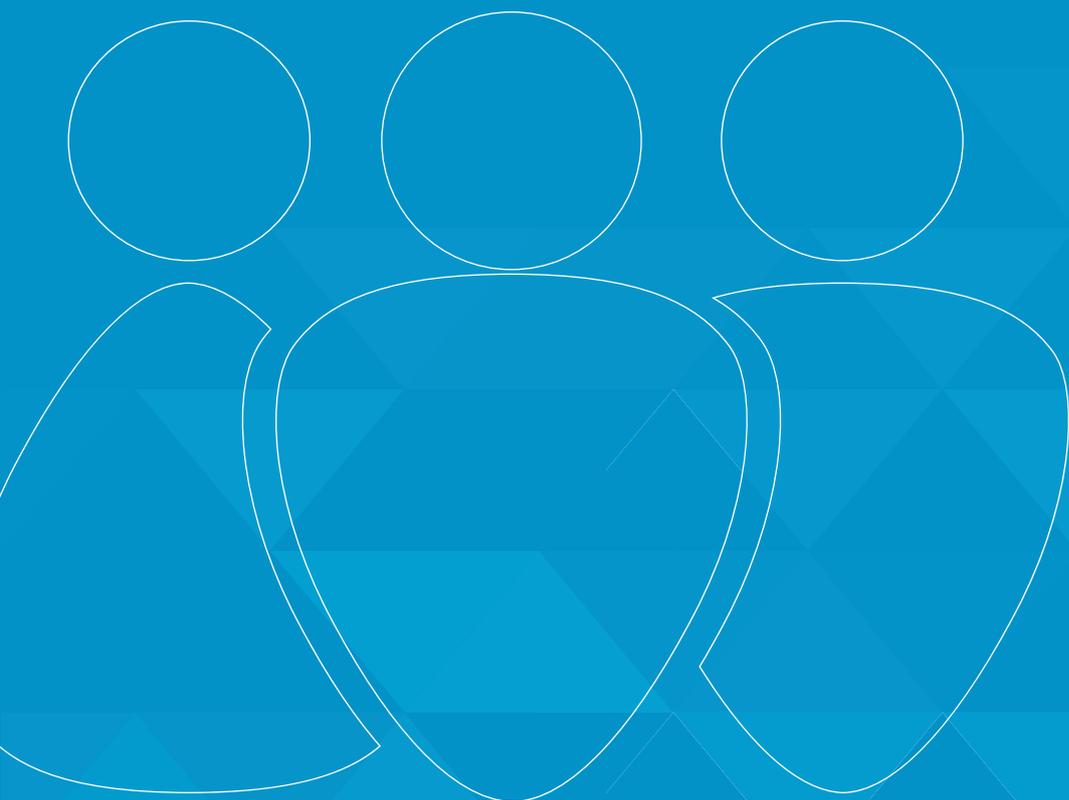
Humanitarian organizations:

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

Acknowledgments

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





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

