

# 781 Civilians Killed in January 2017

The Lowest Death and  
Destruction Toll by Russian  
Forces since they First  
Intervened in Syria

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



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## I. Introduction

The report includes only the death toll of civilians that were killed by the main six influential parties in Syria:

- Syrian regime forces (Army, Security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)
- Russian forces
- Self-management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party forces, a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)
- Extremist Islamic groups
- Armed opposition factions
- International coalition forces
- Other parties

On December 30, 2016, a comprehensive ceasefire was announced in Syria under a Russian-Turkish sponsorship. The parties signing to the statement - the Syrian regime, on one hand, and armed opposition factions, on the other hand, pledged to cease all combat operations including aerial airstrikes, and cease all raids and advancements on the ground. However, military ISIS-held areas (Self-proclaimed the Islamic State) were excluded from the agreement. Since the Ankara Ceasefire Agreement went into effect, there has been a decent and notable drop in the rates of killing throughout Syria in comparison with the previous months from March 2011 until now. The main focus here is the areas under the control of armed opposition factions, as the Syrian regime-held areas aren't subjected to heavy, daily aerial bombardment, which has resulted in the killing of no less than 60% of the victims, and destroyed buildings, displacing the people of Syria.



The ceasefire agreement reflected on the aspects of life for civilians, where more patients are now going to hospitals and medical points, and many children are enrolling again in schools after they were denied that for fear of being killed in light of the frequent targeting of schools, as well as hospitals. Also, markets are more lively, and many infrastructure services are being rehabilitated. Nonetheless, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be affected the most should the ceasefire go on, especially crimes of extrajudicial killing, and, more horrendously, dying due to torture, which strongly proves that there is some sort of ceasefire on the table. The crimes, however, that the international community wasn't able to notice, and particularly the Turkish and Russian sponsors, are still ongoing as nothing has changed in that regard.

Since the start of the Russian intervention in Syria, this month saw the lowest death toll by Russian forces. Also, targeting vital centers by Russian forces is less severe than any previous month since the start of the Russian intervention. Hopefully, this reflects a sincere Russian willingness to comprehensively cease targeting civilians and their gatherings, even though we recorded some breaches by Russian forces, as we pointed out in our [report](#) on the breaches that occurred in the first month of the ceasefire agreement.

We, at SNHR, hope that the signing parties adhere to the ceasefire agreement, and build upon it in order to reach a political process that would fulfill justice for the victims, and hold all the perpetrators accountable, with the current ruling regime being the most notable party given that the regime was the main reason as to why things have gotten to this catastrophic level, perpetrating nearly 90% of the violations against the Syrian people.

## **Methodology**

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is an independent human rights organization that is not affiliate of any political or partisan side. SNHR works on documenting human rights violations by the seven main parties in Syria.

We have been able to document the civilian victims who are being killed by the parties to the conflict to a great extent, whereas armed victims are divided into two categories: Victims from the armed opposition: We face additional difficulties as many of those victims are killed on battlefronts and not inside cities. Also, we aren't able to obtain details such as names, pictures and other important details on account of the armed opposition forces' unwillingness to reveal such information for security concerns among other reasons.



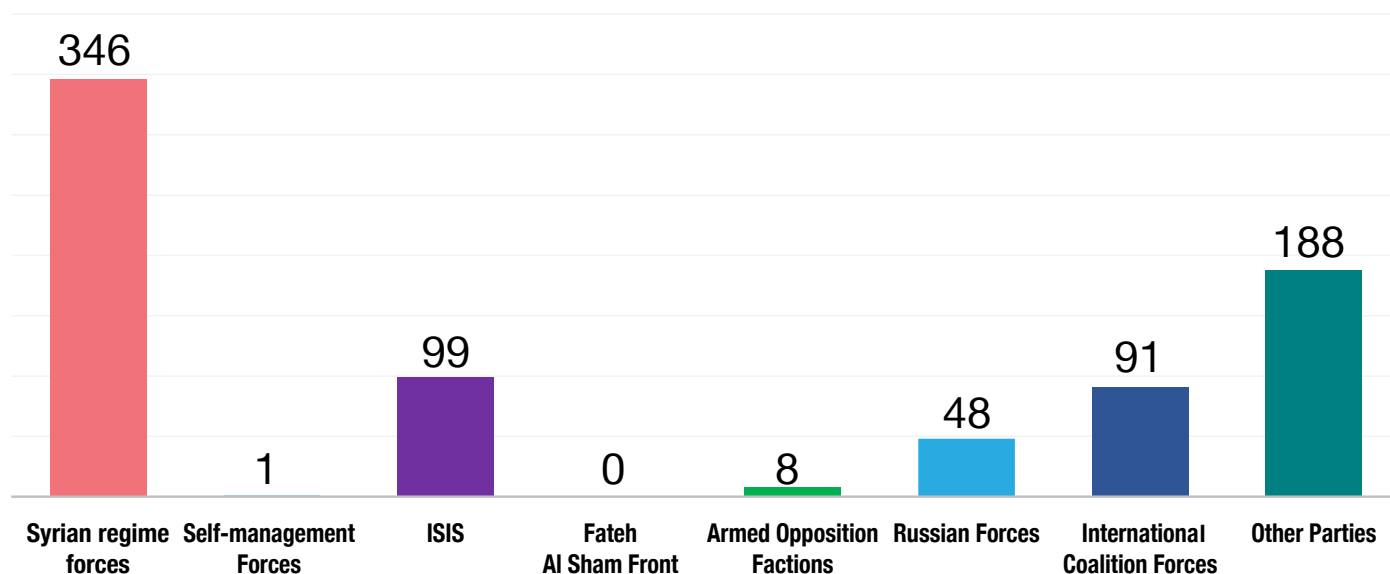
Therefore, the actual number of victims is much greater than what is being recorded. Victims from Syrian regime forces and ISIS: It is almost impossible to access information about this kind of victims and the margin of error is considerably higher due to the lack of any applicable methodology in this type of documentation. The Syrian government and ISIS don't publish, reveal, or record their victims. From our perspective, the statistics published by some groups on this category of victims are fictitious and are not based on any actual data.

Therefore, we are only going to include civilian victims who were killed by all parties and compare them

Please see SNHR [methodology](#) in documenting victims.

## II. Details

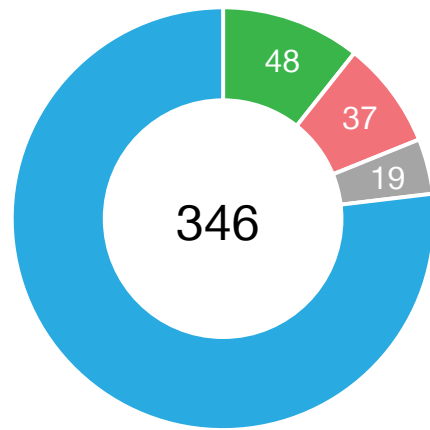
SNHR documented during the month of January 2017 the killing of 781 civilians. Death toll is distributed by the influential party as follows:



**A. Syrian regime forces (Army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)**

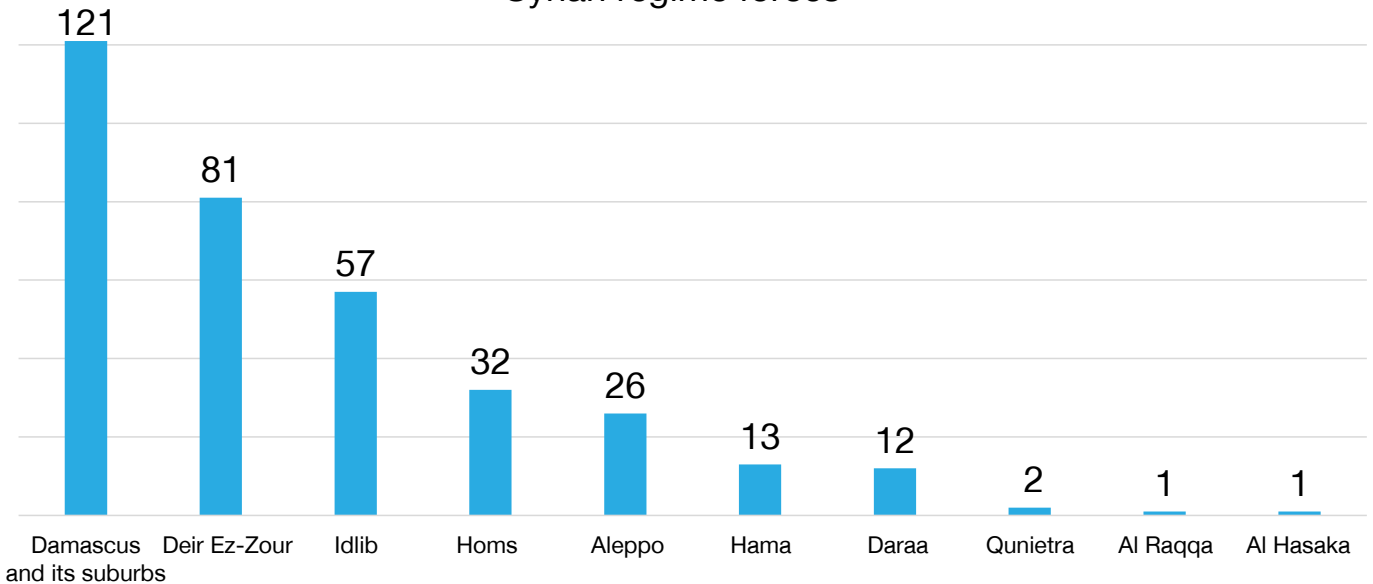
SNHR documented the killing of 346 civilians at the hands of Syrian regime forces including 48 children (two children are killed every day) and 37 women. Additionally, among the victims were 19 civilians who died due to torture. Distribution of victims across Syrian governorates

**Syrian regime forces**



Children Women Due to Torture

**Syrian regime forces**

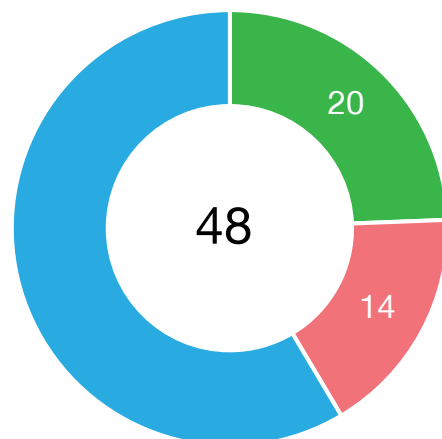


**B. Russian Forces**

We documented the killing of 48 civilians including 20 children and 14 women by the bombardment of forces we believe are Russian. Distribution of victims across Syrian governorate

Aleppo: 35  
Idlib: 13

**Russian Forces**



Children Women



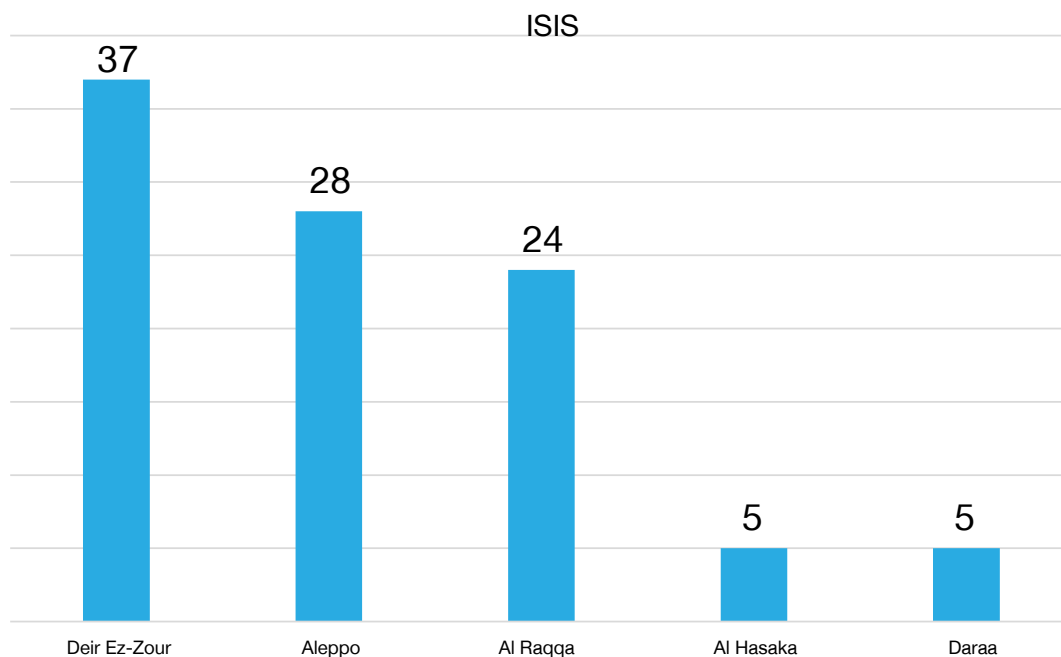
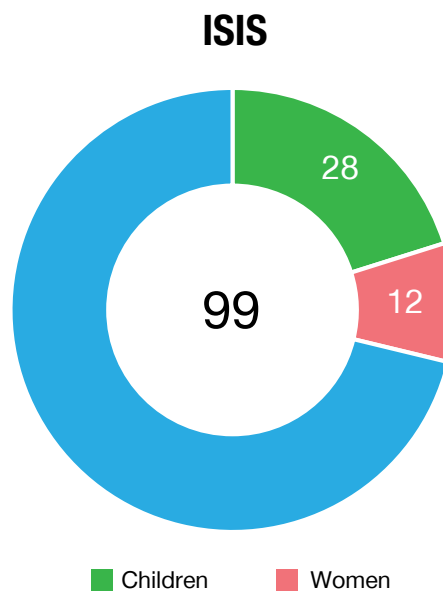
### C. Self-management forces (Primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party forces – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

Killed one civilian from Al Raqqa

### D. Extremist Islamic groups

• **ISIS (Self-proclaimed the Islamic State):**  
**Killed 99 civilians including 28 children and 12 women.**

Distribution of victims across governorate



### **E. Armed opposition factions**

SNHR documented the killing of eight civilians including two children. Additionally, among the victims were three civilians who died due to torture.

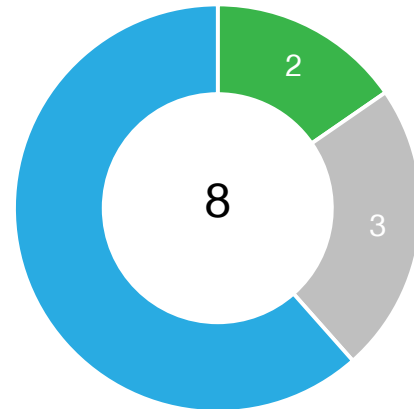
Distribution of victims across governorate

Aleppo: 5

Daraa: 2

Idlib: 1

### **Armed Opposition Factions**



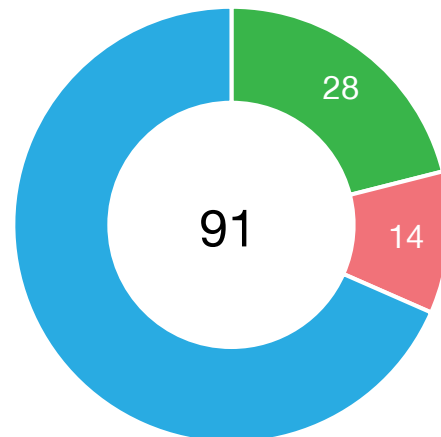
■ Children ■ Due to Torture

### **F. International coalition forces:**

We recorded the killing of 91 civilians including 28 children and 14 women by the bombardment of the international coalition forces warplanes.

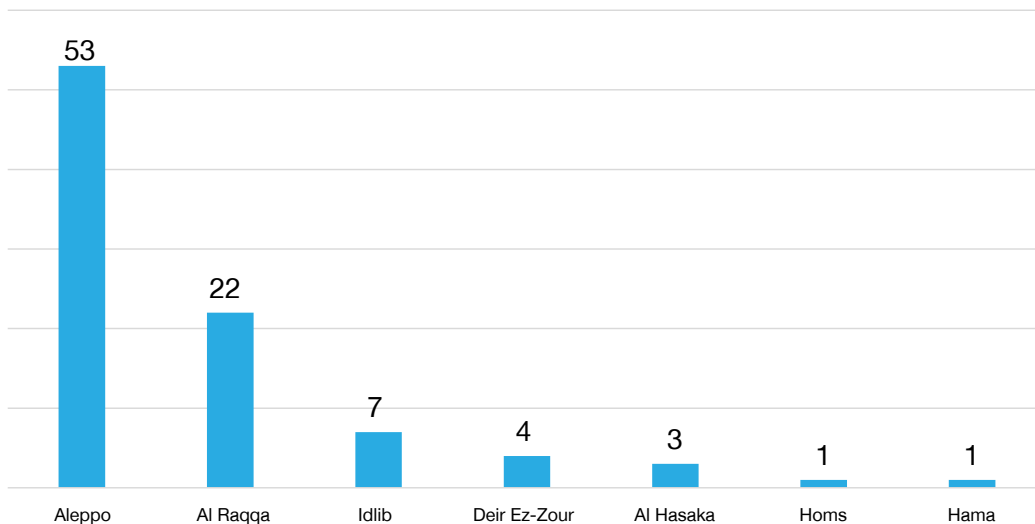
Distribution of victims across Syrian governorates:

### **International Coalition Forces**



■ Children ■ Women

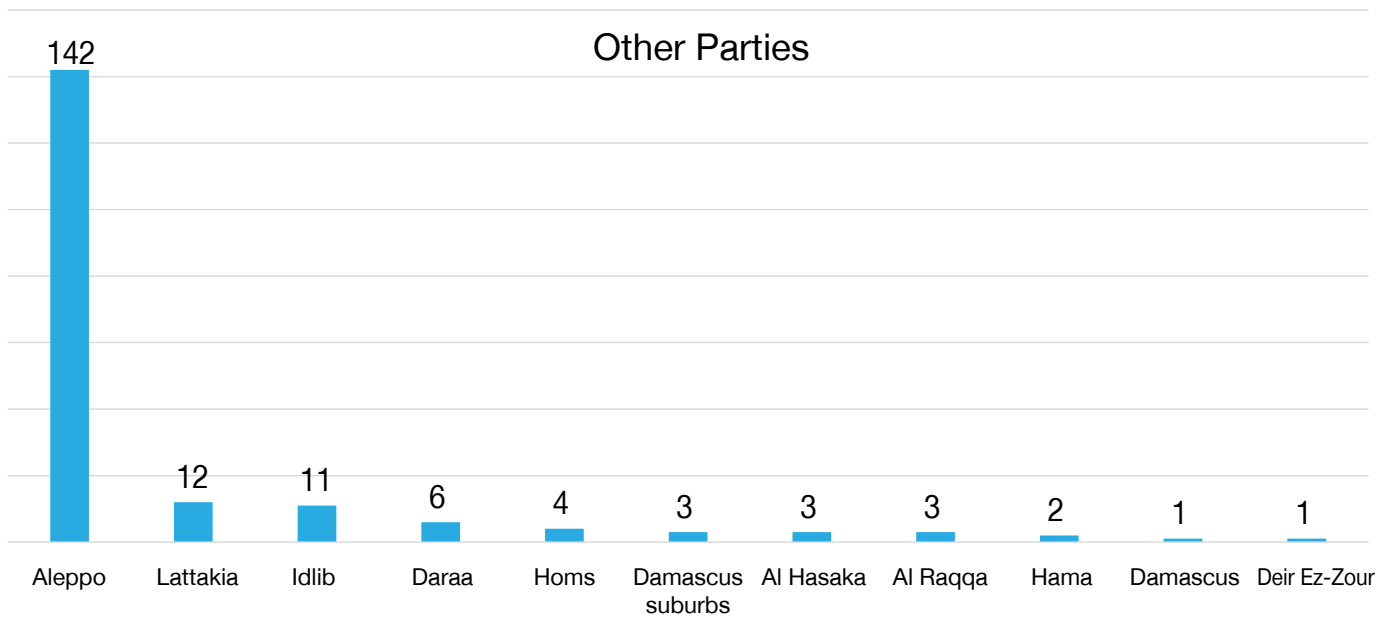
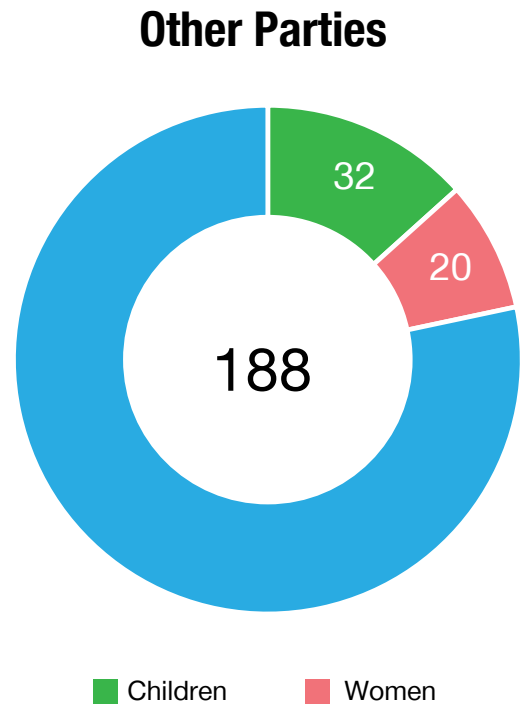
International coalition forces



## G. Other parties

We documented the killing of 188 civilians including 32 children and 20 women by parties we couldn't, at the time of this writing, identify in addition to victims of indiscriminate shelling by land and air Turkish forces, and the victims killed by Jordanian and Lebanese forces.

Distribution of victims across Syrian governorates:



We would like to note that this what we were able to document and verify with full names, place, and time through our members who are spread across Syria. It also should be noted that there are many cases that we couldn't access and document especially in the event of massacres where towns are villages are enclosed and communication is cut off which is what the Syrian government repeatedly does every time. This suggests that the actual number of civilian deaths is greater. All of this is because the Syrian government bans any human rights organization from working on its grounds.





### III. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. SNHR affirms that Syrian regime forces and Russian forces have violated the rules of international human rights law which guarantee the right to life.

Evidences and proofs, according to hundreds of eyewitnesses' testimonies, indicate that 90% at least of the widespread and single attacks were directed against civilians and civilian facilities.

All of this discredits the Syrian government's claims that they are fighting "Al-Qaeda and terrorists"

SNHR notes that these incidents of killing constitute crimes against humanity where most of these cases involved the element of widespread or systematic attack against a group of civilian residents.

2- Kurdish Self-management forces have conducted extrajudicial killings that constitute war crimes.

3- Extremist Islamic groups have conducted extrajudicial killings as well that constitute war crimes.

4- Some of the armed opposition factions have conducted extrajudicial killings that constitute war crimes.

5- International Coalition forces have conducted extrajudicial killings that constitute war crimes.

### Condemnation and liability

Every internationally unlawful act committed by the state will entail a legal responsibility on that state. Equally, the customary international law states that the state is responsible for all the acts committed by the members of its security and military forces. Consequently, the state is responsible for the unlawful acts, including crimes against humanity, that have been perpetrated by the members of its military and security forces.

Additionally, the Russian regime and all Shiite militias as well as ISIS are all foreign parties who were effectively involved in acts of killings and are all responsible legally and judicially in addition to the funders and supporters of the Syrian regime that is perpetrating massacres systemically and ceaselessly on a daily basis.



## Recommendations

### The Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps as it has been a year since Resolution 2139 was adopted and no pledges to stop the indiscriminate bombing, which causes daily destruction and killing, have been made.
- Apply pressure on the states that support Syrian regime forces such as Russia, Iran, and Lebanon in order to stop the weaponry and expertise supply for Syrian regime forces as it has been proven that Syrian regime forces have been involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as states and individuals who are supplying extremist groups, the Democratic Union Party, and some of the armed opposition factions.
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable.
- Instill security and peace in Syria and implement the principle of Responsibility to Protect in order to save the Syrians' lives, history, and culture, from being destroyed, stolen, and ruined.

## Acknowledgment

We gratefully thank all the families and local activists who majorly enriched this report with their contribution.





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