At Least 174 Attacks on Bakeries Have Been Documented Since March 2011 to Date, 149 of Them at the Hands of the Syrian-Russian Alliance

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I. The Bombardment of Bakeries and Failure to Repair Them Is the Main Reason for Crowds of Citizens Queueing Outside Them for Hours:

Syrian citizens are suffering severely simply to secure bread, which is the dietary staple in the country being filling and cheap compared to meat, chicken and vegetables; among the worst forms of suffering is in the way in which citizens are forced to queue for long hours in order to obtain limited rations of bread. The Syrian regime and its Russian ally have used these images of long bread queues to blame this situation on “the West,” on “fighting the Syrian leadership,” or on “economic sanctions,” ignoring two facts:

First: The egregious violations the regime has committed, some of which amount to crimes against humanity, have led to the imposition of sanctions on the regime as a way to force it to end them; if the regime does so, the sanctions will be lifted.

Second: The main reason behind these long queues is the lack of sufficient bakeries in the country, caused by the targeted bombardment of these facilities by the regime and its Russian ally, which destroyed 149 bakeries; while many of these bakeries are located in areas where the regime subsequently regained control, it has not restored them or repaired or replaced their equipment damaged or destroyed in the bombardment.

These deliberate efforts by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally to shift the blame are reminiscent of their behavior at the beginning of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria, during which they attempted to blame Western sanctions for the regime’s lack of medical capabilities, while ignoring the 753 attacks carried out by regime and Russian forces targeting medical facilities, many of them located in areas over which the Syrian regime subsequently regained control, where it also failed to restore these vital facilities or repair the equipment damaged or destroyed in these attacks.

We have recently noticed the relative success of this blame-shifting policy in deceiving some journalists and research centers, who argue that the solution to the problems lies in providing the regime with funds in order to rebuild bakeries and medical centers in the areas where it has regained control; these journalists and research centers are, in fact, not only failing to correctly attribute responsibility for these conditions, but also omit to mention the massive extent of the criminal looting and endemic corruption for which the Syrian regime and its forces are responsible after ten years of disintegration and breakdown. Consequently, the vast majority of funds and aid donated for the Syrian people are looted in systematic and deliberate ways that we have detailed in previous reports, and which our colleagues at Human Rights Watch also covered exhaustively in its report entitled “Rigging the System”; in short, the Syrian regime has established networks of fake organizations whose core is controlled by the security services, which direct aid to regime beneficiaries and seize a large proportion of it for themselves, amongst other details.
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On February 17, 2021, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) announced that 12.4 million people in Syria were classified as being food insecure at the end of 2020 (60% of the total population), a sharp and alarming increase of 3.1 million people compared to the WFP’s statistics in May 2020. On February 18, Save the Children issued a statement expressing its concern about the steep rise in the numbers of the population suffering from hunger across Syria, adding, “It is estimated that 6.2 million of the country’s children are going without food, a rise of 35% in just four months”. On March 5, Reuters quoted a statement by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, who said that “Close to three-quarters of the population now need humanitarian assistance, an increase of 20% compared to 12 months ago.” Human Rights Watch said in a report issued on March 22 that “The Syrian government’s failure to fairly and adequately address a bread crisis brought on by a decade of armed conflict is forcing millions of Syrians to go hungry.” On March 5, Reuters quoted the World Bank that said: “Syrians are increasingly dependent on subsidised bread as rampant inflation has driven up food prices more than 200% in the last year.”

This report outlines the record of attacks on bakeries by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces since the outbreak of the popular uprising in Syria in March 2011 until September 2021, and the civilian casualties that resulted from these incidents, based on the details recorded on the Syrian Network for Human Rights’ (SNHR) database, collected through the monitoring and documentation processes that have been going on for more than ten years to date. We also issue a monthly report that includes documentation of incidents involving attacks on bakeries which are among the most vital facilities, and confirms that this huge scale of targeting bakeries, especially by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally, has played a key role in increasing the suffering of Syrian citizens who are forced to queue in front of bakeries for many hours simply to obtain a small amount of bread.

International humanitarian law clearly prohibits the targeting of civilian facilities and objects, whether these attacks are indiscriminate or deliberate, with indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on bakeries constituting a grave violation that amounts to a war crime. International human rights law establishes the responsibility of the state to secure an adequate standard of living for its citizens, and the Syrian regime has failed to secure this. Rather, the regime is the main cause of the deterioration in the public’s ability to access various essentials for everyday life, especially bread, the staple food in Syria.

In general, we rely on field researchers working for SNHR to gather data, and we have obtained direct testimonies from survivors, relatives of victims, aid workers and media activists, none of which are cited from any open sources, with this report providing three of these testimonies. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without us offering or providing them with any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering particularly traumatic violations as much as possible, as well as providing assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias.
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SNHR also analyzed videos and photographs that were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. Videos posted by activists show, amongst other things, sites of attacks, the bodies of the victims and the injured, and the extent of the significant destruction sustained as a result of these attacks.

Furthermore, we retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in this report on a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by Syrian regime forces and some other armed groups. Readers are welcome to find out more about SNHR’s methodology.

The investigations detailed in this report have proved conclusively that the targeted bakeries were located within civilian areas where no military bases or armories for factions of the Armed Opposition or Hay’at Tahrir al Sham were situated during or even before the attack. Also, Syrian regime forces failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks, despite such warnings being required under international humanitarian law.

The information contained in this report only represents the bare minimum of incidents which we have been able to document, and of the severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn’t include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:

The Syrian regime is facing questions after its military battles and is completely incapable of providing basic goods and services, primarily bread, to citizens. The regime, which has been in power for decades, continues to rule through murderous violence; this makes it clear that there will be no political or economic breakthrough without the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2254 and the achievement of a political transition towards democracy which ensures that the perpetrators of violations are held accountable, thus enabling the return of millions of displaced persons and the start of the reconstruction of destroyed vital facilities, especially bakeries.
II. The Record of the Most Notable Attacks on Bakeries in Syria Since March 2011 and the Resulting Deaths, According to the SNHR’s Database:

The SNHR documented at least 174 attacks on bakeries by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and September 2021, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)**: 99
- **Russian forces**: 50
- **ISIS (Self-proclaimed ‘Islamic State’)**: Four
- **The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army**: One
- **US-led coalition forces**: Nine
- **Other parties**: 11

The total record of attacks on bakeries was distributed by year as follows:

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**Notes:**

1. [Infographic of the Reality of Attacks on Bakeries by the Parties to the Conflict and the Controlling Forces in Syria between March 2011 and September 2021](#)

2. We generally use the term ‘the Syrian regime’ rather than ‘the Syrian government,’ because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government’s role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch, the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria.

Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term ‘the Syrian government’ in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.
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The record presented above shows that 2019 saw the highest number of attacks on bakeries compared to the previous and subsequent years - approximately 28% of the total record of attacks - most of which were at the hands of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces, followed by 2016 and 2017; 2019 also saw the highest annual record of attacks perpetrated by the Syrian regime and Russian forces.

The record of attacks on bakeries was distributed across the Syrian governorates as follows:

![Graph showing distribution of attacks across governorates](image)

This record indicates that Idlib governorate saw the largest number of attacks on bakeries, accounting for approximately 46% of the total record, followed by Aleppo governorate with approximately 26%. This record also shows that most of the attacks against bakeries committed by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces took place in the same two governorates in the same order, with the percentage of such attacks committed by Syrian regime forces in Idlib reaching 51% of the total number of attacks that they committed, and in Aleppo approximately 27%; as for the Russian forces, the percentage of attacks on bakeries they committed in Idlib reached 56% and in Aleppo 26% of the total number of attacks they committed against bakeries across Syria.

According to the SNHR’s database, attacks on bakeries have resulted in the deaths of 801 civilians, including 109 children and 70 women (adult female), between March 2011 and September 2021, distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:
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Below we outline some of the attacks on bakeries we documented:

1. Syrian Regime forces:

On Tuesday, August 21, 2012, Syrian regime forces’ helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on the Aghir Bakery in the Aqyoul neighborhood in Aleppo city, resulting in the deaths of 13 civilians, including one woman, and injuring others, in addition to severely damaging the bakery building. The neighborhood was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, September 25, 2012, personnel affiliated with Syrian regime forces stormed the al Ne’ma Bakery in al Joura neighborhood of Deir Ez-Zour city, then shot dead seven civilians among the bakery workers and burned their bodies. The neighborhood was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

The SNHR spoke with an activist nicknamed Abu al Baraa3 from Deir Ez-Zour city, who told us that on the morning of September 25, 2012, the 105th Brigade of the regime’s Republican Guard stormed the alleys of al Joura neighborhood in the city, where he lives with his family: “We closed the doors and windows, and tried not to make noise so as not to draw the attention of the storming personnel, and we could hear their voices and the sounds of random shooting that coincided with their storming; after their withdrawal at sunset that day, I went out of the house to walk around the neighborhood and check what happened. When I arrived at al Ne’ma Bakery, which is about 700 meters from my house, there was a gathering of people, and I smelled a fire. I knew that it came from seven burnt

3 We contacted him via WhatsApp on July 19, 2021

Syrian Regime forces: 685 civilians, including 86 children and 56 women.

Russian forces: 47 civilians, including nine children and three women.

ISIS: One civilian.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army: Three civilians.

US-led coalition forces: 47 civilians, including 10 children and seven women.

Other parties: 18 civilians, including four children and four women.

85.52%  5.87%  5.87%  2.25%  0.37%  0.12%
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bodies belonging to the bakery workers that I saw inside; they were burned by the 105th Brigade when they stormed the neighborhood in the morning; the bodies of the workers showed signs of gunshots, and it seems that they were executed before being burned."

On Wednesday, October 31, 2012, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes fired missiles at the automatic bakery in al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the deaths of seven civilians, and injuring others, in addition to severely damaging the bakery’s building and equipment. The city was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Monday, December 3, 2012, Syrian regime artillery forces fired shells near al Idlibi Bakery in Bostan al Qasr neighborhood, east of Aleppo city, while people were gathering in front of the bakery to get bread, resulting in the deaths of 20 civilians, and injuring others, in addition to causing minor material damage to the bakery building. The neighborhood was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, December 23, 2012, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes fired missiles at the automatic bakery in Helfaya city in the northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, while a large number of people were gathering there to buy bread, resulting in the deaths of 44 civilians - according to what we were able to document up until the moment of preparing this report - including three women, and injuring nearly 80 others, in addition to causing significant material damage to the bakery’s building. The city was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Monday, December 24, 2012, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes fired missiles at a bakery in Talbisa city in the northern suburbs of Homs governorate, resulting in the deaths of 15 civilians, including six children, and injuring others, in addition to causing significant material damage to the bakery building and equipment. The city was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, December 25, 2012, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes fired missiles at the bakery in al Bseira city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of 22 civilians, and injuring nearly 73 others, in addition to causing significant damage to the bakery building and equipment. The city was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, July 24, 2013, Syrian regime forces fired a surface-to-surface missile at Hamdan neighborhood in al Yarmouk Camp, south of Damascus city. The missile landed near the Hamdan Bakery, resulting in the deaths of seven civilians, and injuring others, in addition to causing significant material damage to the bakery’s building and equipment. Al Yarmouk Camp was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.
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On Saturday, September 6, 2014, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes launched eight missile raids on Raqqa city, two of which targeted al Andalus Bakery in Tal Abyad Street in the city, resulting in the deaths of 53 civilians, including three children and 13 women, and injuring nearly 40 others, in addition to completely destroying the bakery building, putting it out of service. Raqqa city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, September 18, 2014, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, one of which targeted al Ragheb Bakery in al Souq Street in the city, resulting in the deaths of 39 civilians, including one child and three women, in addition to destroying the bakery building, putting it out of service. Al Bab city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Friday, February 3, 2017, Syrian regime fixed-wing (MiG-21) warplanes fired missiles at al Thurah Bakery, north of Idlib city, partially destroying the bakery building, in addition to causing fires to break out in many parts of it, putting it out of service. Idlib city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, February 21, 2018, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs near a bakery in Hazza town in the Eastern Ghouta in the eastern of Damascus Suburbs governorate, causing significant material damage to the bakery building and equipment, putting it out of service. The town was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.
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On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a shell at al Rawda Automatic Bakery in the center of Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, igniting a fire in the fuel tanks on the bakery’s roof, as well as causing severe material damage to the building, putting it out of service. The city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, June 15, 2019, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes fired missiles at the Elaf Automatic Bakery, east of Ma’ar Zita village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, igniting a fire in one part of the bakery, and causing significant material damage to its equipment. The village was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.
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On Sunday, June 30, 2019, Syrian regime fixed-wing warplanes fired a number of missiles at the Um Zaytouna Automatic Bakery, in Um Zaytouna village near Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, completely destroying its building, and causing significant material damage to its equipment. The Syrian Network for Human Rights confirms that the bakery suspended its work following the military campaign launched by the Syrian-Russian alliance on the fourth de-escalation zone on April 26, 2019. Um Zaytouna village was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, December 15, 2019, at around 09:30 local time, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs near the Abu Ratib Automatic Bakery in Ma’ar Shoreen village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The barrel bombs fell on a house next to the bakery, resulting in the death of a child in the house, in addition to setting fire to the bakery, and causing significant material damage to its building and equipment. 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.
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On Sunday, February 9, 2020, at around 18:50. Syrian Regime fixed-wing warplanes used heavy machine guns in aerial bombardment of al Thurah Automatic Bakery, in al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, partially destroying the bakery building, in addition to causing moderate material damage to its equipment. Al Atareb city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

2. Russian forces:

On Thursday, October 15, 2015, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a missile near a bakery in Teir Ma'la village in the northern suburbs of Homs governorate, causing significant damage to the bakery building and equipment. The village was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, November 17, 2015, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the main bakery in al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, causing significant damage to its building and equipment, and destroying nearly 200 tons of flour. The city was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.
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On Tuesday, February 16, 2016, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the automatic bakery in al Shaddadi city in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, resulting in the deaths of 20 civilians, including four children and one woman, and causing significant damaged to the bakery building, putting it out of service. Al Shaddadi city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Friday afternoon, May 27, 2016, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the automatic bakery in Hraitan town in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the deaths of 10 civilians, and causing significant material damage to the bakery building and equipment, putting it out of service. The town was under the control of Armed Opposition factions at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, January 3, 2018, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, used incendiary ammunition to target the Local Council's Bakery, located beside the local council garage, in al Shamalı neighborhood, Saraqeb city, in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, igniting a fire in the bakery, and causing moderate material damaged to its building and equipment. It should be noted that the bakery occupies part of the former pedestrian bus garage (Idlib New Garages). The city was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.
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On Sunday, January 20, 2019, at around 3:00 local time, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired two missiles at al Taqwa Automatic Bakery in the north of al Janoudiya village of Jisr al Shughour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, causing massive damage to the bakery building, in addition to inflicting great material damage on its equipment. The village was under the control of Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Photo shows al Taqwa Bakery in al Janoudiya village, Idlib after it was hit by a Russian airstrike - January 20, 2019
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On Sunday, May 19, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, carried out consecutive strikes using missiles near al Huda automatic Bakery in west of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of 10 civilians, including four children, two women and an unborn baby, in addition to partially destroying the bakery’s perimeter fence, and inflicting moderate material damage on the building and furniture. Kafranbel city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Monday, November 25, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at al Eman Automatic Bakery northeast of Beneen village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, partially destroying the bakery’s building, causing significant material damage to its equipment, and igniting a fire in the fuel section inside the bakery, putting it out of service. The city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, January 17, 2020, at around 11:00, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles that landed near the Einjara Automatic Bakery to the east of Einjara village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, partially destroying the bakery building, and causing moderate material damage to its equipment. Einjara village was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.
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3. US-led coalition forces:

On Wednesday, March 22, 2017, US-led coalition fixed-wing warplanes fired missiles at the reserve bakery in al Thani neighborhood of Tabaqa city in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, resulting in the death of 36 civilians, including 10 children and seven women, in addition to causing significant destruction to the bakery building, putting the bakery out of service. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, June 21, 2017, US-led coalition fixed-wing warplanes fired a number of missiles near al Rayyan Bakery in Amn al Dawla neighborhood, west of Raqqa city, resulting in the death of 11 civilians, in addition to causing significant material damage to the bakery building, putting it out of service. Raqqa city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

4. Other parties:

On Saturday, November 23, 2019, a car bomb exploded near al Iskan Automatic Bakery, known as al Enizan Bakery, in al Sina’a neighborhood in Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, resulting in the death of five civilians, including one child, in addition to causing significant material damage to the bakery building, putting it out of service. SNHR is still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details. The city was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

III. Crowds of Citizens Gathering in Front of Bakeries in the Absence of Precautionary Measures in Light of the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Pandemic:

The bombardment of bakeries and the failure to repair the vast majority of them led to a decrease in their numbers, which were originally sufficient to cover people’s needs before they were targeted in relation to the population, but the targeting of this large number of bakeries since 2011 has led to an increase in the number of citizens queuing in front of those which remain; photos and videos were published on the Internet, whose credibility we have verified, showed long queues gathered in front of many bakeries in different areas. A number of people told us that they spend many hours queueing to obtain bread. Despite these tightly packed queues, lack of distancing measures and long waiting hours, we have seen no directives from the Syrian regime ordering the introduction of precautionary measures in light of the outbreak of the Coronavirus since March 2020 to date, with crowds of citizens routinely forced to wait for many hours in front of bakeries without social distancing or masks. The Syrian Network for Human Rights has monitored dozens of such cases.
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IV. The Syrian Regime Prohibited the Entry of Flour to the Areas It Besieged Within the Policy of “Kneel or Starve”:

The Syrian regime not only targeted bakeries in the areas that escaped its control, but it also prevented flour from entering the areas it besieged, which were those that had escaped its control, but were still surrounded on all sides by other regime-controlled areas, and lacked any border crossings, we provided details in previous reports on the areas besieged by the Syrian regime and the policy of collective punishment pursued by the regime against residents there, at the forefront of which was preventing anyone from bringing in flour, which is one of the most essential staple foodstuffs, as well as stopping supplies of medicine, infant formula, and other essential necessities of life from being brought in.

The besieged areas are distinguished from others by the additional challenges they’ve faced, caused by the Syrian regime’s and its allies’ targeting of their bakeries, and secondly, by the scarcity of flour, and consequently increasing its prices, as well as the difficulty of providing maintenance equipment or new equipment to build new bakeries. The Eastern Ghouta was the largest and most densely populated area among those besieged, and the Western Ghouta (Daraya, Mu’adamiyet al Sham), which came under prolonged siege, along with other areas such as the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo, the northern suburbs of Homs and other areas where we addressed their siege in detail; it is necessary to recall them here because of the specific nature of this report, and the fact that the conditions there confirm that the Syrian regime has ‘weaponized’ flour as one of the tools in its war against its political opponents, with this starvation strategy encapsulated in the slogan used by the regime’s shabiha and security services: “Either kneel or starve.” which has long been applied even to political detainees in order to break their will, with dozens dying due to lack of food; the Caesar photographs, as well as photographs of horribly malnourished detainees released from the Syrian regime’s detention centers show clearly how the Syrian regime uses the withholding of the state-owned food resources as a weapon against its political opponents.

Dani Qappani⁴, a staff member with the Syrian Network for Human Rights, from Mu’adamiyet al Sham city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, who was present in the city throughout the Syrian regime’s siege from August 2012 until October 2016, when the regime enforced an agreement forcibly displacing the people of the city, told us that from the beginning of the siege, regime forces prevented the entry of all basic materials, including flour, into the city, whose population at the time was around 20,000 citizens:

“...The bakeries worked for two months, depending on the available stock of fuel and flour, then we suffered from severe hunger and used to eat the herbs grown on the land there to survive. In mid-October 2013, it was agreed with the Syrian regime to evacuate those who wanted to leave the city, as a result of the harsh siege conditions that we were going through, especially after the city was targeted with chemical weapons in August of the same year. Some left the city, while some 12,000 civilians stayed in the city. On December 25, 2013, a truce agreement was imposed on the remaining residents of the city, as a result of which a specified number of bread bundles per day

⁴ We contacted him via Facebook Messenger on June 6, 2021
was allowed to enter, without allowing the entry of any materials that would help in the operation of the remaining working bakeries." Dani added: "After mid-2014, the Syrian regime again prevented the entry of bread, and for residents to obtain it, the regime demanded they elect the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar al-Assad; due to the urgent need to provide food for children, some families voted [for him], with each receiving one bundle of bread in exchange." Dani continued: "In August 2014, the United Nations convoys entered the city for the first time, and provided one bag of flour for each family based on what Syrian regime forces allowed. After that, the flour was cut off until the date of our displacement from the city on October 19, 2016; until that date, each family got one bundle of bread per day, with the Syrian regime forces’ checkpoints preventing citizens from bringing bread with them and confiscating it." Dani added that Syrian regime forces not only caused the suspension of work at the city’s bakeries, but also bombarded them, putting two bakeries out of service as a result.

The SNHR also spoke with Abdul Karim Yasin⁵, a former official in the bread distribution committee in Talbisa city in the suburbs of Homs city, who told us that the Syrian regime prevented the supply of subsidized flour intended for bakeries in areas that had begun breaking free of regime control as a form of collective punishment for the people there or only allowing flour to be brought into them at the black market price, with the sale of flour and the raw materials needed for the manufacture of bread, such as yeast and diesel, being secured by smugglers among the regime officers and members of regime security services controlling the crossings and checkpoints surrounding the area: "During the time when the Armed Opposition were in control over the northern suburbs of Homs, which lasted from 2012 to 2018, the regime repeatedly tried, through its representatives, to communicate with the faction leaders, offering them deals to bring in flour and the rest of the foodstuffs in exchange for conditions aimed mainly at controlling the area." Abdul Karim added: "The bakeries were not spared the bombardment, as the Syrian regime bombarded five out of the nine existing bakeries, putting some of them out of service, while the people were able to rehabilitate other bakeries." Abdul Karim confirmed that this policy was not only pursued in the northern suburbs of Homs but in other areas of the governorate, citing the events in al Wa’er neighborhood in Homs city during the period when it was under siege by Syrian regime forces: "The Syrian regime forces’ checkpoints personnel during the siege, which lasted nearly four years and ended with a forced displacement agreement in 2017, prevented people who wanted to enter the area from bringing in more than one bag of bread weighing 1 kg each time they crossed the checkpoint."

Recently, during the ‘presidential elections’, and among many other illegal practices, we observed that some mayors have been demanding bread-selling representatives⁶ to collect citizens in buses and take them to polling stations to cast their votes. The representatives were threatened with being deprived of bread supplies if they failed to comply with this demand.

[^5]: We contacted him in May 2021
[^6]: The bread sales representatives are individuals, mostly shop-owners, who receive an allocation of bread and are entrusted by the regime with selling this to citizens under the regime’s ‘smart card’ system.
V. Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The Syrian regime has targeted bakeries as part of attacks on residential neighborhoods, with some of these attacks being deliberate, and causing the death of a number of citizens standing in front of the bakeries. International humanitarian law strongly prohibits attacks on protected objects, and prohibits indiscriminate, deliberate or reprisal attacks against these objects. Bakeries are among these protected objects, should not be subjected to deliberate or indiscriminate attack, and should not be used in the war effort. The Syrian Network for Human Rights condemns all the attacks included in this report, which only represent those attacks the SNHR was able to document rather than the total number of attacks.
- The parties that carried out the attacks have violated the rules of international humanitarian law; at the forefront of these parties is the Syrian regime and its allies who provide it with military support, led by Russia and Iran. Deliberate attacks on bakeries constitute war crimes.
- The attacks included in the report are considered a violation of customary international humanitarian law, as the munitions used were fired at bakeries that provide citizens with bread and were not directed at attaining a specific military objective.
- The bombardment has caused massive collateral damage involving loss of lives, injuries, and significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- This report proves that the Syrian regime has failed in many of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Economic Rights, particularly in securing basic food for citizens.

Recommendations:

UN Security Council:

- The Security Council should take further action after the adoption of resolutions 2139 and 2254, impose serious obligations to stop indiscriminate bombardment which must be adhered to by all parties to the conflict, as well as to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian issue must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those involved in perpetrating crimes should be held accountable.
- Stop treating the Syrian government as a legitimate official party representing the Syrian people and state after it has perpetrated crimes against humanity and has completely failed to secure the most basic necessities of a decent life.

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9 ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 7. [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_cha_chapter2_rule7](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_cha_chapter2_rule7)
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 to lift sieges, as well as increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to ensure that fair trials are held 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 have 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. 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.
- Stress the illegitimacy of the Syrian regime, which targeted bakeries and prevented the entry of flour to Syrian citizens simply because of their political opposition to the regime.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations concerning the incidents mentioned in this report.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Hold the Syrian regime responsible for the need for large numbers of citizens to gather and queue in front of bakeries, condemn the targeting of bakeries, and launch investigations into the incidents included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

The Syrian Regime:

- Stop treating the Syrian state and its resources as the private property of the ruling family.
- Stop harnessing state resources to stay in power at the expense of citizens’ suffering, impoverishment and displacement.
- Cease bombardment of bakeries, protected objects and civilian areas, and respect customary humanitarian law.
- Bear all legal and material consequences, and compensate the victims and their families from the resources of the Syrian state.
At Least 174 Attacks on Bakeries Have Been Documented Since March 2011 to Date, 149 of Them at the Hands of the Syrian-Russian Alliance

The Russian regime:

- Launch investigations into the incidents detailed in this report, inform the Syrian community of their results, and hold those involved accountable.
- Compensate the wounded and the bereaved families of those killed by the current Russian regime while bombing bakeries.
- Ensure the complete cessation of bombardment of bakeries, protected objects and civilian areas, and respect the customary humanitarian law.
- Stop supporting the Syrian regime, which is involved in crimes against humanity against the Syrian people and is incapable of securing the most basic necessities of life for Syrian citizens.

Thanks and Condolences

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all the residents and local activists whose contributions have enriched this report, and our condolences to the victims and their families.