

Eleventh Annual Report: The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2021 The State's Collapse and Society's Fragmentation



Friday 21 January 2022

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.

SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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I. Introduction:

This is the Syrian Network for Human Rights' eleventh annual report since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011, which subsequently turned into an internal, and partly an international, armed conflict. Since the early days of the peaceful uprising for freedom and dignity, Syrian citizens have been subjected to the most egregious types of violations by the Syrian authorities; from the beginning, these have included arbitrary arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, and even killing, with regime forces starting by using live bullets against unarmed protesters who took to the streets in peaceful demonstrations to express their opinions; now, for the eleventh consecutive year, we continue to document the perpetration of multiple violations against Syrian citizens and the Syrian state by multiple parties, with the Syrian regime in general responsible for by far the largest proportion of violations throughout this period.

While this report shows a numerical decline in the extent of some violations, the Syrian people in all regions are still subjected to violations, many of which are considered the worst in the world, in particular forced displacement, torture, enforced disappearance, the looting of their lands and properties. The effects of these violations are not measured or felt in the abstract, apart from the terrible accumulation of the past ten years, during which the violations have continued without pause, meaning that the terrible effect of these violations increases day by day, and the situation continues to go from bad to worse. In our annual report for the year 2017, we warned of the loss of the state, and we believe that by 2021, and even before then, we had already arrived at the stage of the collapse of the state.

The Syrian state has now become simply a setting for an exchange of fire in proxy international conflicts, a weapons-testing laboratory, and a backdrop for the establishment and recruitment of militias and mercenary groups,

with Syria's geographical territory disintegrating into five spheres of influence, each of which is also a setting for its own internal inter-state conflicts, without any consideration or respect for the laws of war. At the same time, none of the parties involved in administering these territories respect the rights of their residents, forcing the majority of the Syrian people towards displacement and seeking asylum. Repression and corruption have, to date, caused the displacement of 13 million Syrian citizens and the destruction of thousands of vital facilities and millions of buildings, (in addition to other less important, but no less destructive, factors) in addition to bringing about a comprehensive economic collapse, while Syrians in general have lost the ability to initiate any meaningful action for positive change amid the maelstrom surrounding them, reaching a state of paralysis and absolute powerlessness in which they are denied any substantial role.

We believe that the main cause of all the unimaginable suffering that the country and the people have endured from this comprehensive collapse is the Syrian regime, which flatly rejected the just, popular demands for genuine democratic elections to end the despotic dynastic rule of the ruling family and the brutal, pervasive control of its security services; instead, the regime met these long-denied demands for fundamental human rights with murderous iron and fire, enabled by the security services' blind loyalty and the support of the regime's dictatorial and totalitarian allies globally provided in exchange for the functional services provided by the regime to various countries at the expense of the dignity and freedom of Syria. Based on all these factors, the regime has inflicted the most atrocious types of violations, many of which amount to crimes against humanity, as was proven by the Koblenz Court in the sentence it recently issued against a former regime official. The regime's aim in committing

these atrocities was to deter and end popular demands, and to destroy every possible channel for freedom, to show that it would accept no form of negotiation for a democratic political transition even if this refusal led to the collapse of the Syrian state and the fragmentation of society.

The international community, most particularly the allies of the Syrian regime, must realize that the continued perpetration of violations in such a dangerous manner means that the Syrian nation and state will turn into a quagmire of endless conflicts and a fertile environment for extremist organizations on all sides, bringing additional waves of asylum, and ending any hope for the idea of safe return for refugees and stability for the nation. The international community must acknowledge that there remains only one feasible solution, which is to rebuild the collapsed and shattered state on the foundations of genuinely democratic values and respect for human rights, foremost among which are citizenship and freedom. This will enable the millions of Syrians scattered around the world to restore hope and to return to their country and work to rebuild it, and to improve its living, social and economic conditions towards progress and civilization.

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

“The talk among some countries about normalizing relations with the Syrian regime was one of the most reprehensible issues in 2021; even worse was the failure of democratic countries to object to this intolerable proposal, which gives no consideration to the millions of Syrian people who are victims of murder, torture, and displacement by the Syrian regime, which has not changed in any way from its brutal behavior towards Syria’s people, and which still completely rejects any political solution based on democratic principles that respect fundamental tenets of universal human rights. Also, the other parties involved in the conflict in Syria are still engaged in committing multiple violations, with all still continuing to prey upon the ruins of the collapsed Syrian state.”

Background:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, three months after the outbreak of the popular uprising in March 2011, is an independent human rights organization which monitors and documents human rights violations in Syria, mobilizing our efforts and capabilities towards limiting them, contributing to the protection of the victims' rights, exposing the perpetrators of violations in preparation for holding them accountable, raising awareness amongst Syrians of their civil and political rights, promoting the optimal conditions for human rights, advancing transitional justice, supporting democratic change, achieving justice and peace in Syria, and cataloging and archiving the history of events. Based on these objectives, the Syrian Network for Human Rights archives the violations' incidents it documents within an extensive database, issuing reports and studies based on the material gathered there.

SNHR is a [member of](#) the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P), the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the International Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the Every Casualty Worldwide (ECW), [and a founding member of the Global Alliance on War, Conflict & Health](#).

It should also be noted that [the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) has relied on the Syrian Network for Human Rights as a primary source in all of its statistics on the analysis of victims of the conflict in Syria; SNHR also works in cooperation with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) and has signed a data-sharing agreement with the Independent International and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other UN bodies, as well as with international organizations such as [the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#). The SNHR is one

of the most important [data sources for the Syria situation reports issued by the foreign ministries of many countries worldwide](#), with a large number of Arab and international news agencies relying on the SNHR's reports and statistics for their [coverage](#) and reports on Syria.

In 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights continued its work, issuing approximately 73 reports and nearly 1,056 news bulletins, in which it addressed multiple types of the most notable human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, such as extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, displacement and forced displacement, and the use of prohibited munitions and other highly destructive munitions, and other violations. These reports were based on evidence from numerous sources, including approximately 156 testimonies of victims who have been subjected to various types of violations, injured or survivors of the attacks, paramedics, central signal workers or victims' families. All these testimonies were obtained through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, with none of them cited from any open sources. All these procedures are carried out under SNHR's internal protocols, which we have worked for years to perfect, and which we strive constantly to develop through our experience in order to keep pace with the highest standards of care and reliability, in addition to hundreds of photos, videos and other open sources of information. Readers can study our working methodology more extensively at this [link](#).

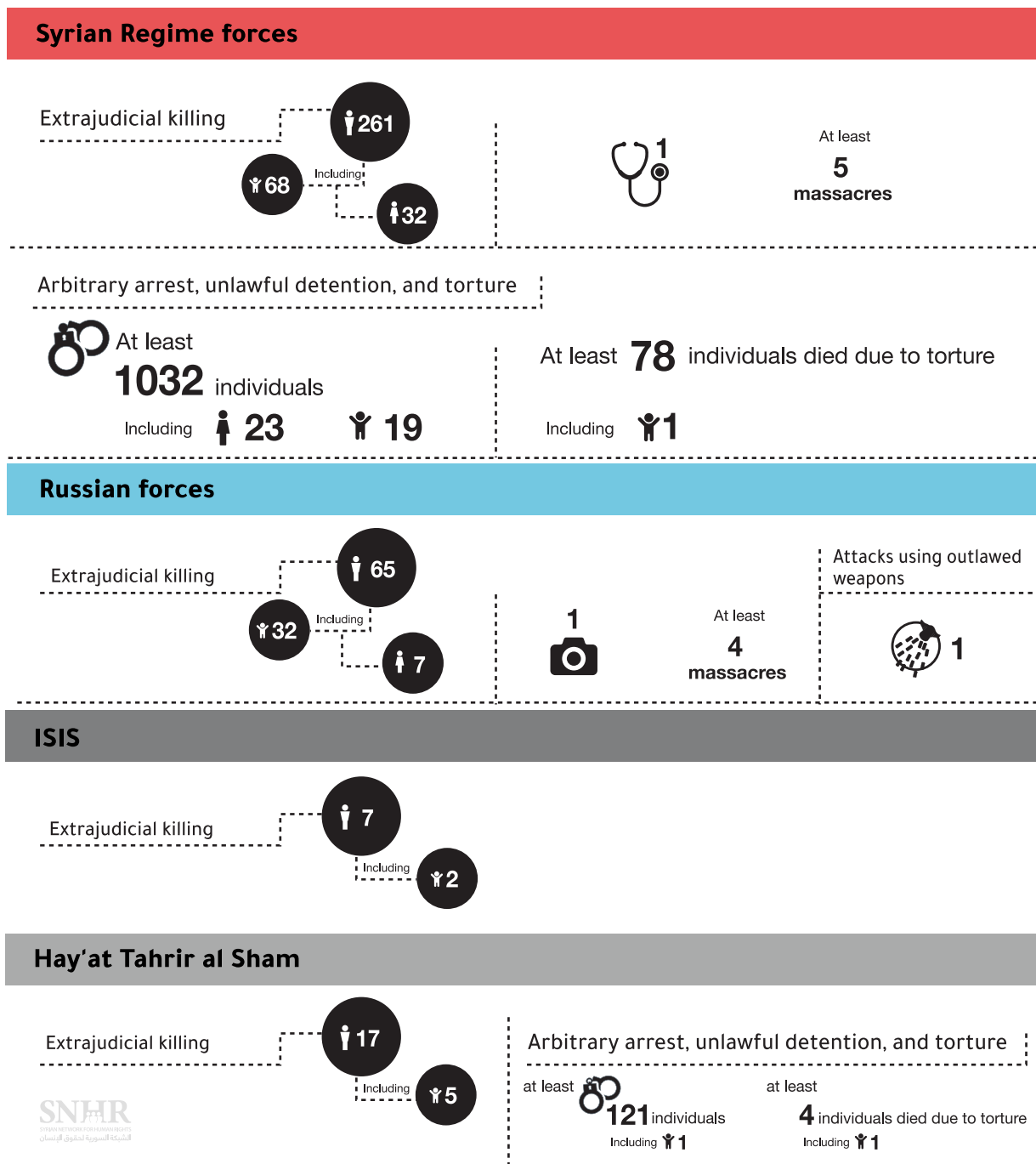
In this report, we provide examples of the incidents of violations that took place, many of which we have referred to in our annual report on [the death toll of victims of extrajudicial killings](#), and [the record of arbitrary arrests](#), in order to ensure that the report is of a manageable length and to reduce the repetition of data cited in our numerous intersecting reports; in

many cases, we have only referred to them in passing. Additionally, the report includes detailed information on political, human rights-related and military events that occurred in 2021 to provide a clearer picture of the context of the events during which the violations occurred. We also emphasize that the legal reference works which we use in relation to the Syrian situation are international humanitarian law and customary international law, along with international human rights law, in addition to referring, within a narrow scope and a limited number of cases, to the Syrian regime's violation of the Syrian Constitution and the local laws established in its name.

As we emphasize in every report, the information provided in this report represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred which we were able to document, given the exceptional difficulties and challenges that we have faced during our work as shown in the methodology. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

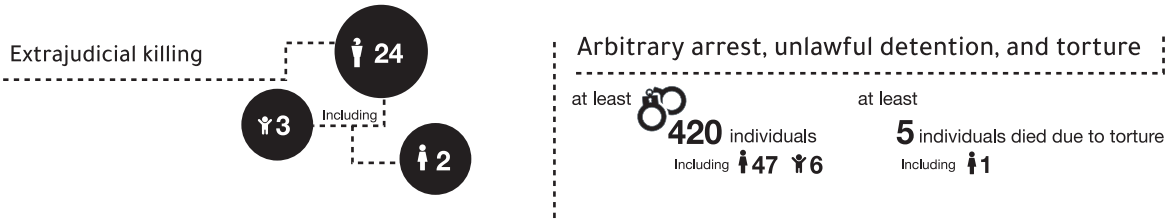
II. Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2021 According to the SNHR Database:

This report covers the most notable human rights violations by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2022. These violations are outlined in the following infographic¹:

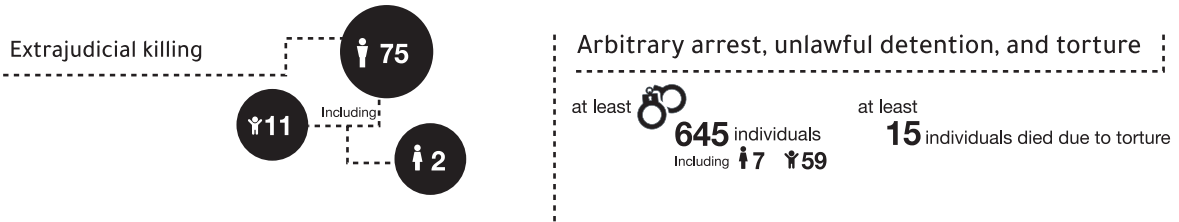


¹ Infographic

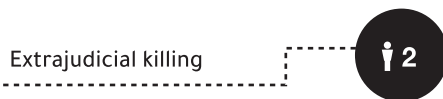
All Armed Opposition Factions/ Syrian National Army



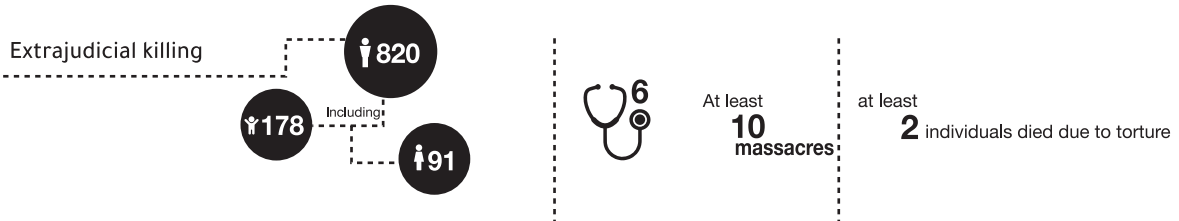
SDF (mainly PYD)



US-led Coalition forces



Other parties



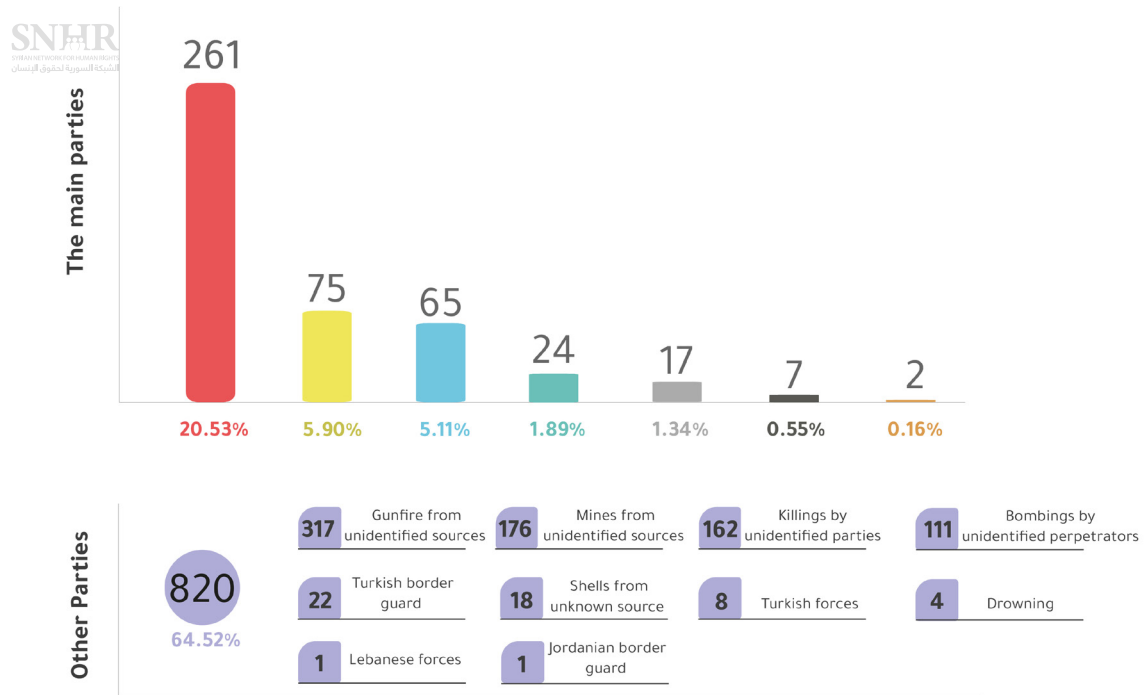
At least 86,000 persons were forcibly disappeared due to military operations by the Syrian-Russian Alliance forces in north and south Syria



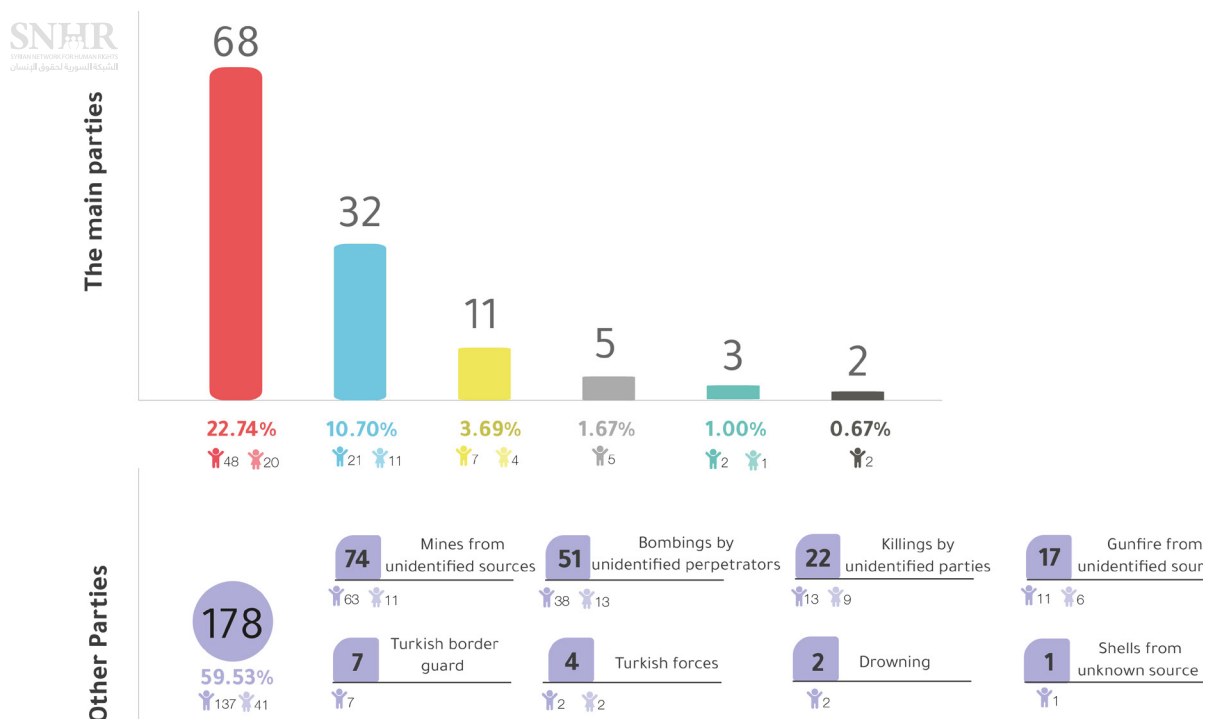
1. Extrajudicial Killing:

SNHR documented in 2021 the deaths of 1,271 civilians, including 299 children and 134 women (adult female), killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed as follows:

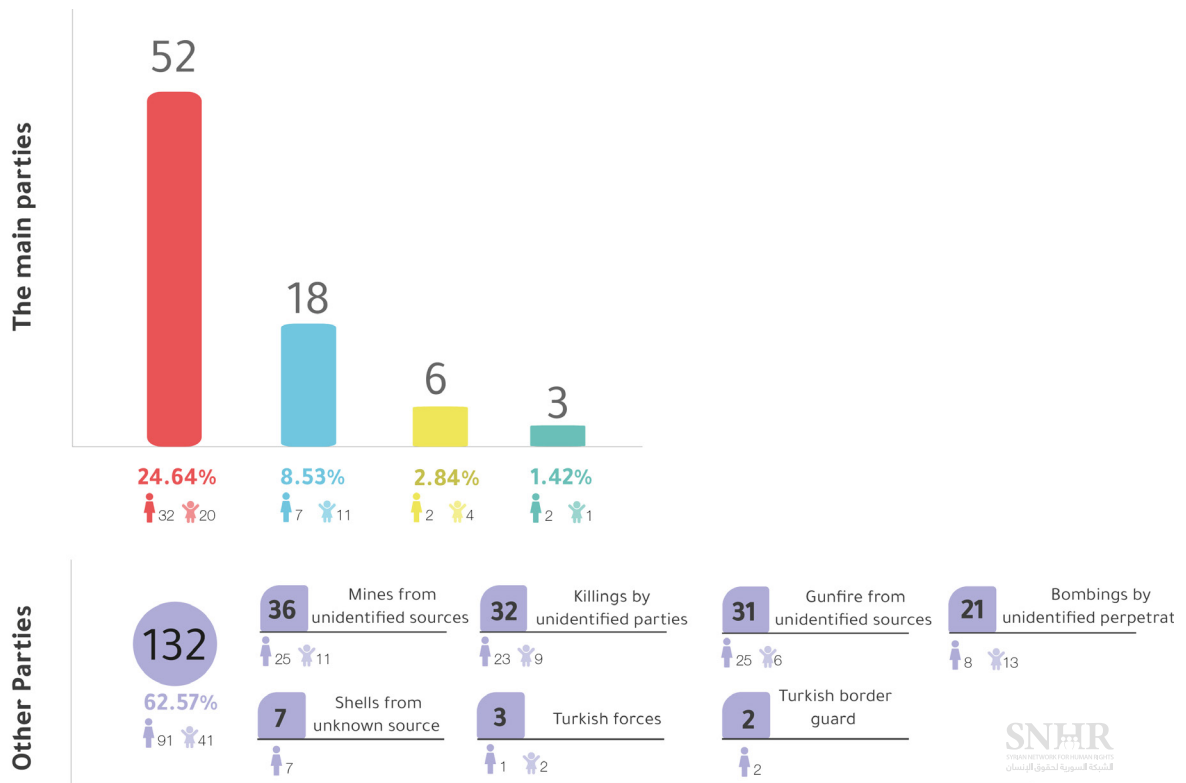
1,271 civilians were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in 2021



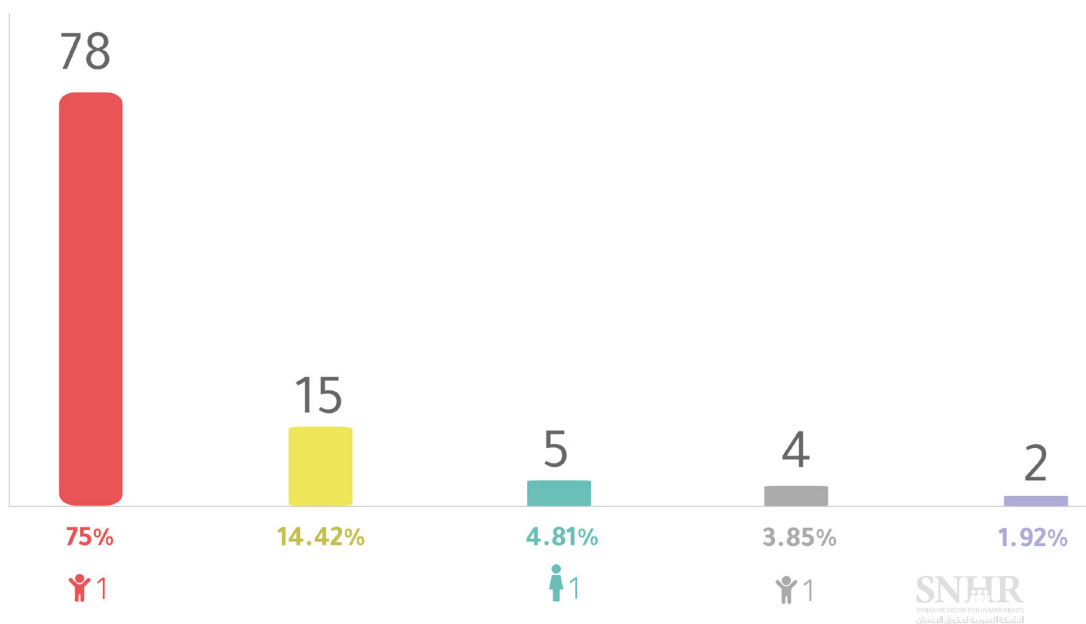
299 children were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in 2021



211 females were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in 2021



104 individuals died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in 2021



A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)²** : 261 civilians, including 68 children and 32 women.
- **Russian forces:** 65 civilians, including 32 children and seven women.
- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State')**: Seven civilians, including two children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham³** : 26 civilians, including two children.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army⁴** : 24 civilians, including three children and two women.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 75 civilians, including 11 children and two women.
- **US-led coalition forces:** Two civilians.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 820 civilians, including 178 children and 91 women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines whose source we have not been able to identify: 176 civilians, including 74 children and 25 women.
- Shells whose source we have not been able to identify: 18 civilians, including one child and seven women.
- Gunfire by parties we have been unable to identify: 317 civilians, including 17 children and 25 women.
- Killings by parties we have been unable to identify: 162 civilians, including 22 children and 23 women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have not been able to identify: 111 civilians, including 51 children and eight women.
- Turkish border guards: 22 civilians, including seven children and two women.
- Jordanian border guards: One civilian.
- Lebanese forces: One civilian.
- Drowning: Four civilians, including two children.
- Turkish forces: Eight civilians, including four children and one woman.

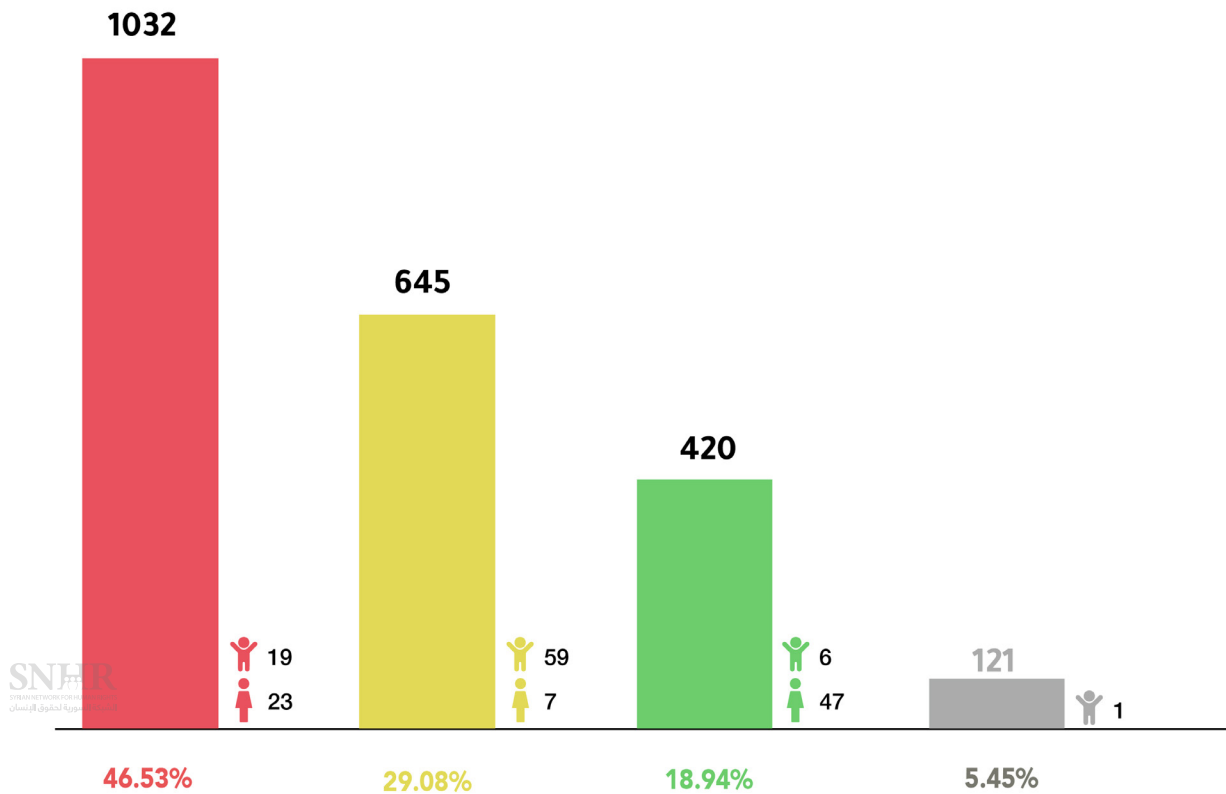
² We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic 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.

³ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

⁴ All Armed Opposition factions: Many of the factions that emerged since 2011 in various neighborhoods and areas in Syria no longer exist, and many of these factions were not under any central command structure. At the end of 2017, the Syrian National Army was established, with the Armed opposition factions, which remained at that point gathered under its command.

2. Arbitrary Arrest and Unlawful Detention:

In 2021, SNHR's team documented at least 2,218 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 85 children and 77 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed as follows:



- **Syrian Regime forces:** 1,032, including 19 children and 23 women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 121, including one child.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:** 420, including six children and 47 women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 645, including 59 children and seven women.

● Syrian Regime forces and Iranian militias
 ● Hay'at Tahrir al Sham
 ● All Armed Opposition Factions/ Syrian National Army
 ● SDF (mainly PYD)

Women (adult female)
 Children

3. Targeting Medical Personnel:

SNHR documented in 2021 the deaths of seven medical personnel at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed as follows:

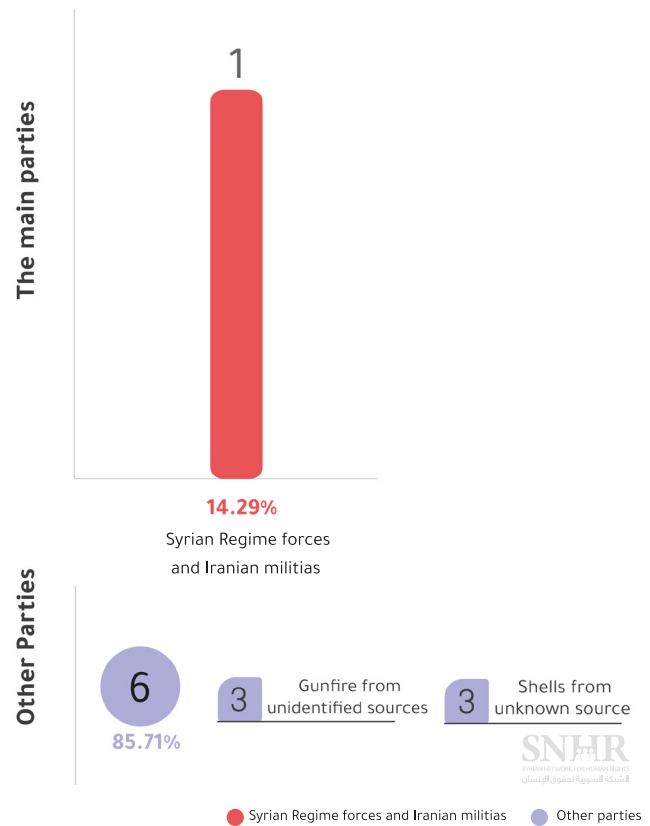
A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** One.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of six medical personnel at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Shells whose source we have not been able to identify: Three.
- Gunfire by parties we have been unable to identify: Three



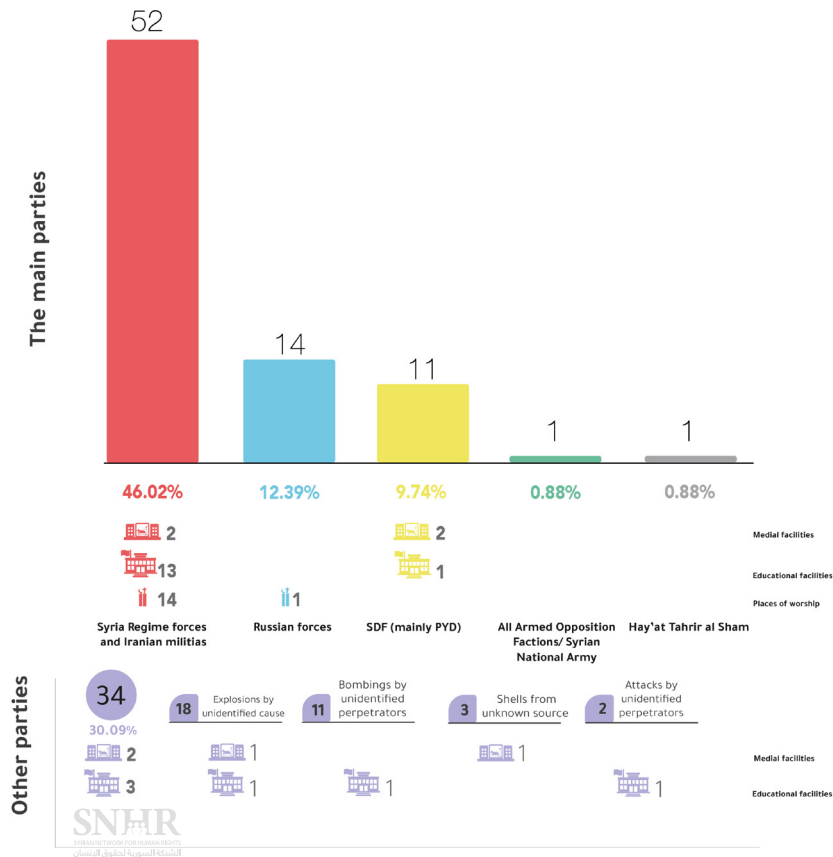
4. Targeting Media Workers:

SNHR documented in 2021 the death of one media worker at the hands of Russian forces.

5. Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities:

In 2021, SNHR documented at least 113 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities. These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:



- **Syrian Regime forces:** 52 incidents, 13 of which are still under investigation, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for these 13 attacks being either Syrian regime forces or Russian Forces.
- **Russian forces:** 14.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** One.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:** One.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 11.

B. Other parties:

Other parties committed 34 incidents, which were distributed as follows:

- Explosions whose perpetrators we have not been able to identify: 18.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have not been able to identify: 11.
- Shells whose source we have not been able to identify: Three, which are still under investigation, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for these 13 attacks being either Syrian regime forces or Syrian Democratic Forces.
- Attacks by parties we have been unable to identify: Two.

6. Unlawful attacks:

SNHR documented one cluster munition attack in 2021, carried out by Russian forces targeting Aleppo governorate. This attack resulted in the death of one civilian and caused moderate injuries to 10 others.

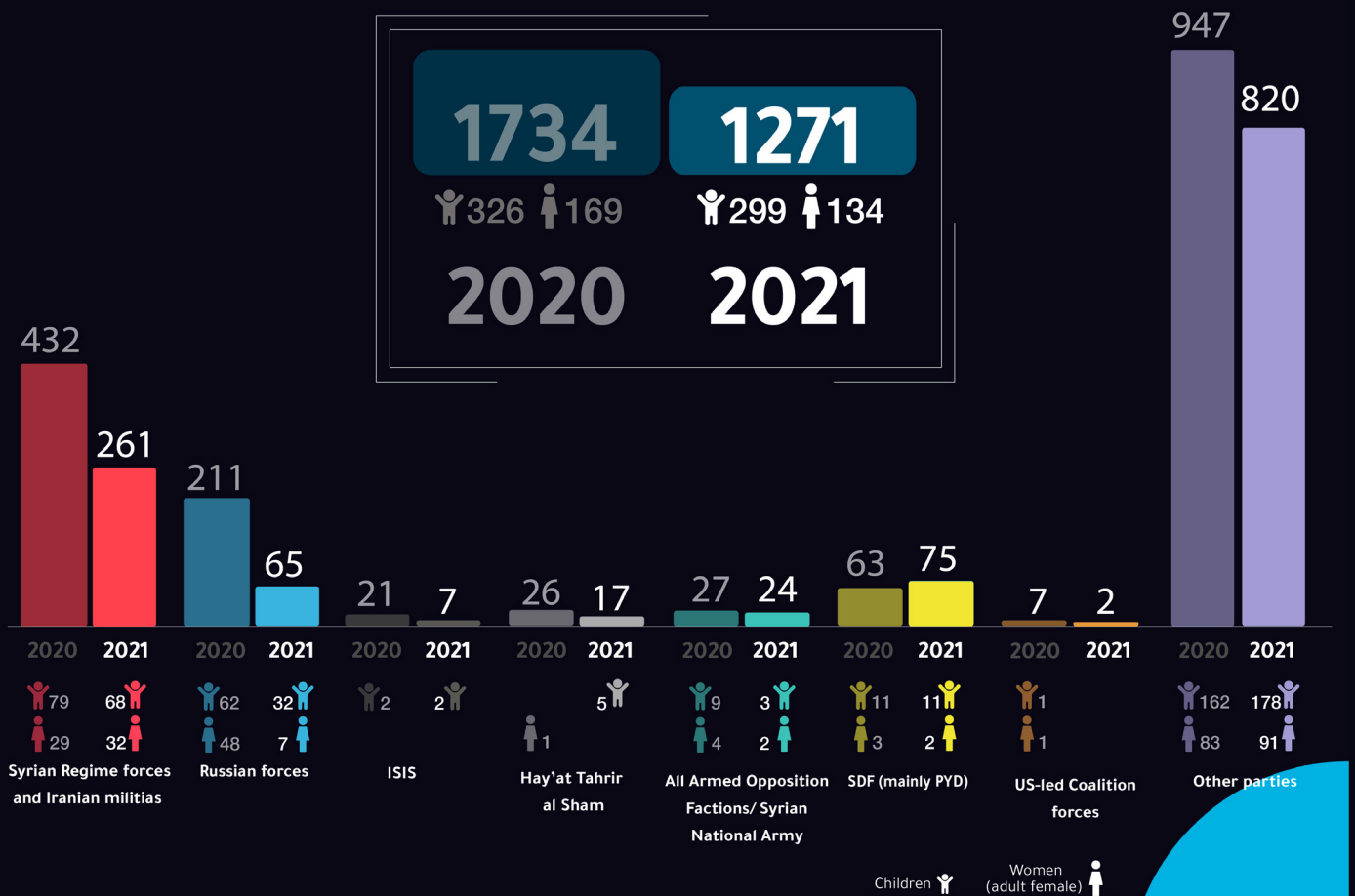
7. Forced displacement:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimates that nearly 86,000 civilians have been displaced in 2021, as a result of military operations launched by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in northern and western Syria.

III. Comparison between the Most Notable Patterns of Human Rights Violations in 2020 and 2021:



Comparison between **death tolls of civilian victims** killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021

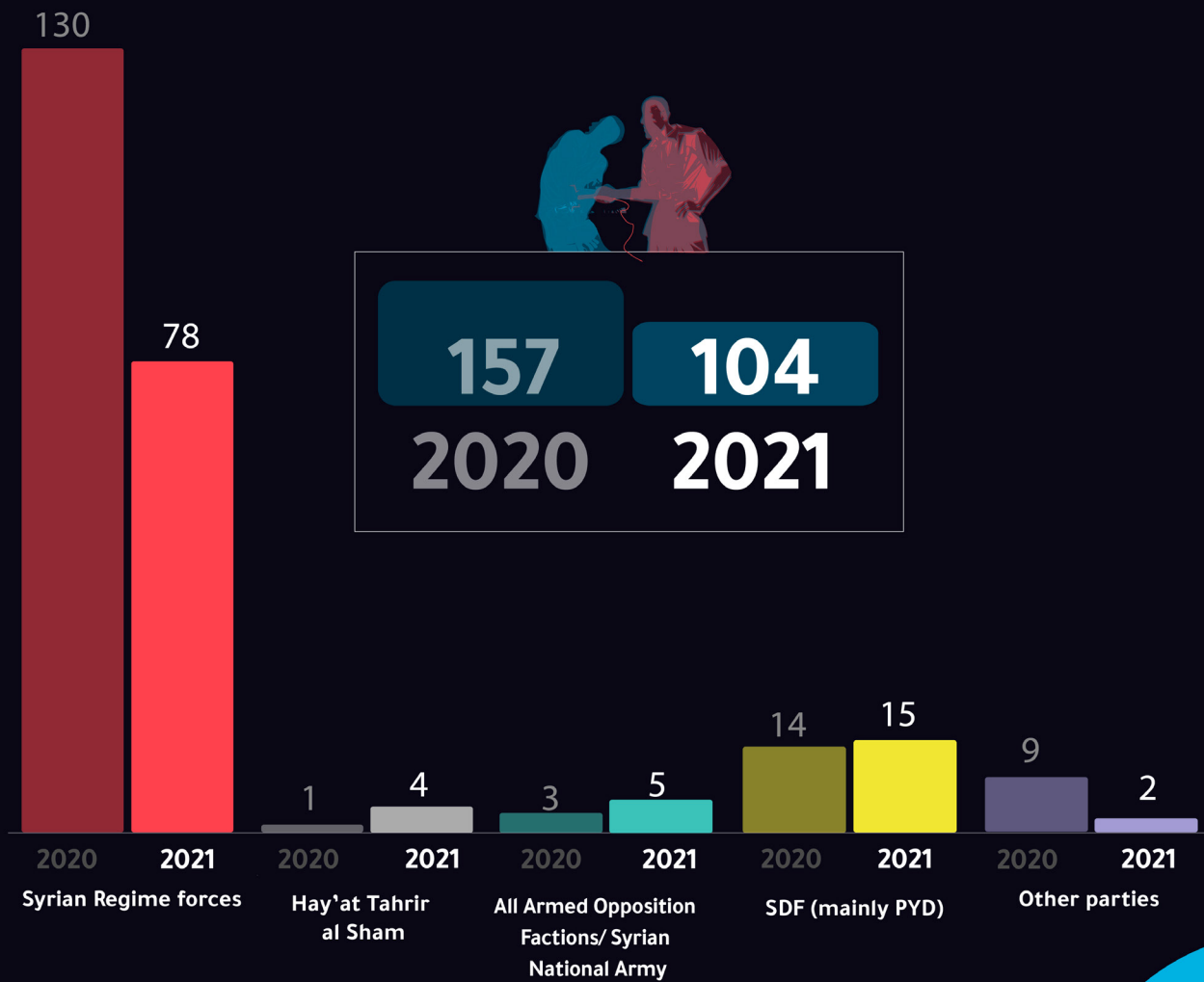


As documented by SNHR

January 2022



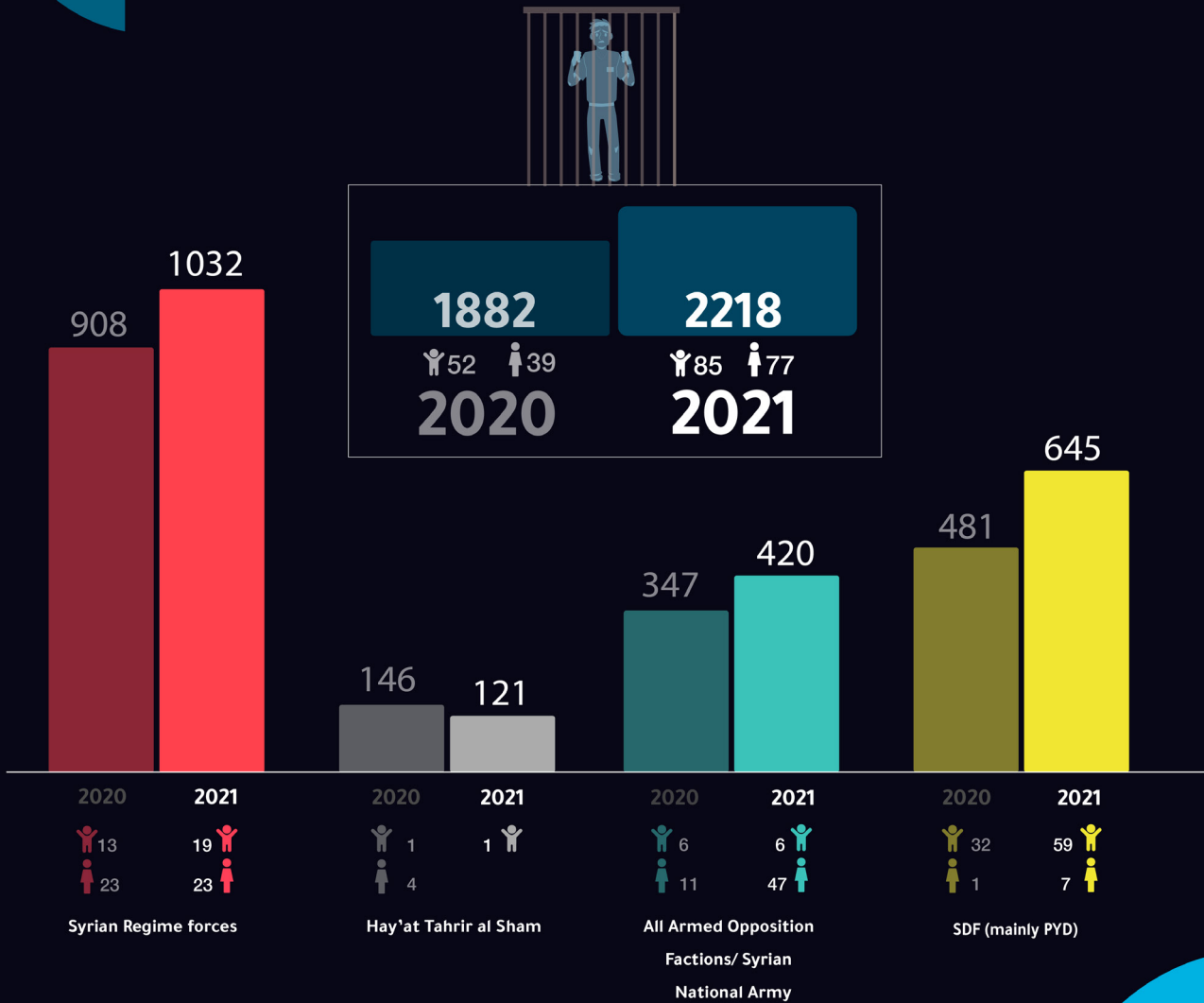
Comparison between death tolls of victims who died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021



As documented by SNHR

January 2022

Comparison between records of arbitrary arrests at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021



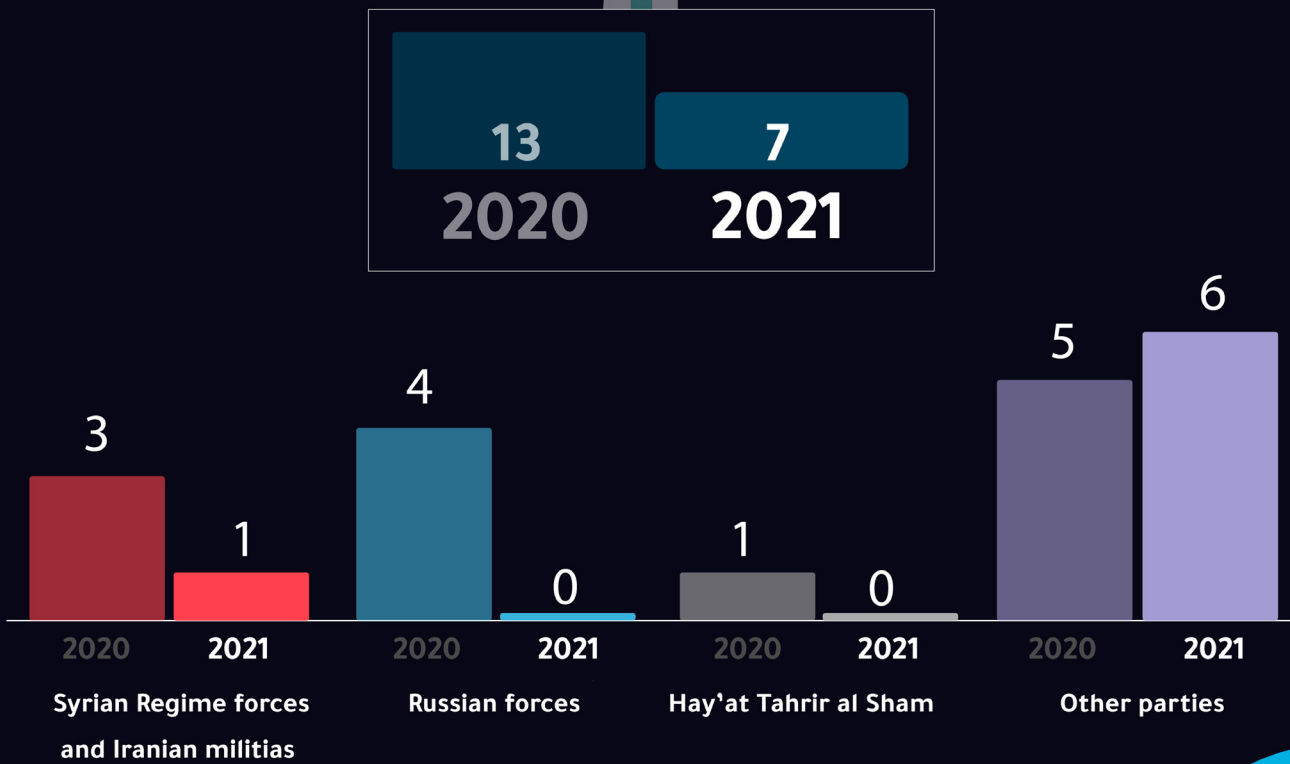
Women (adult female) Children

As documented by SNHR

January 2022

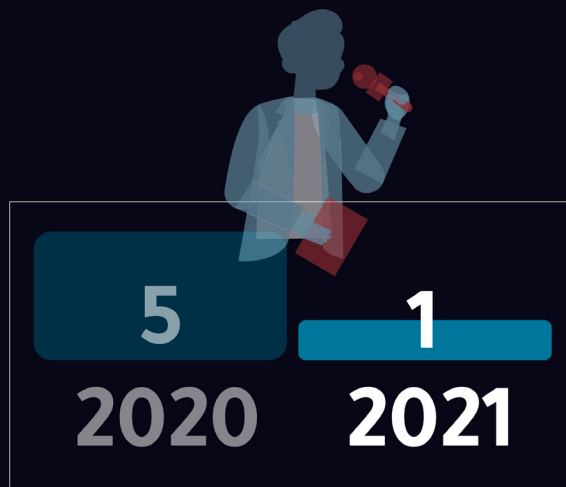


Comparison between death tolls of medical personnel killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021



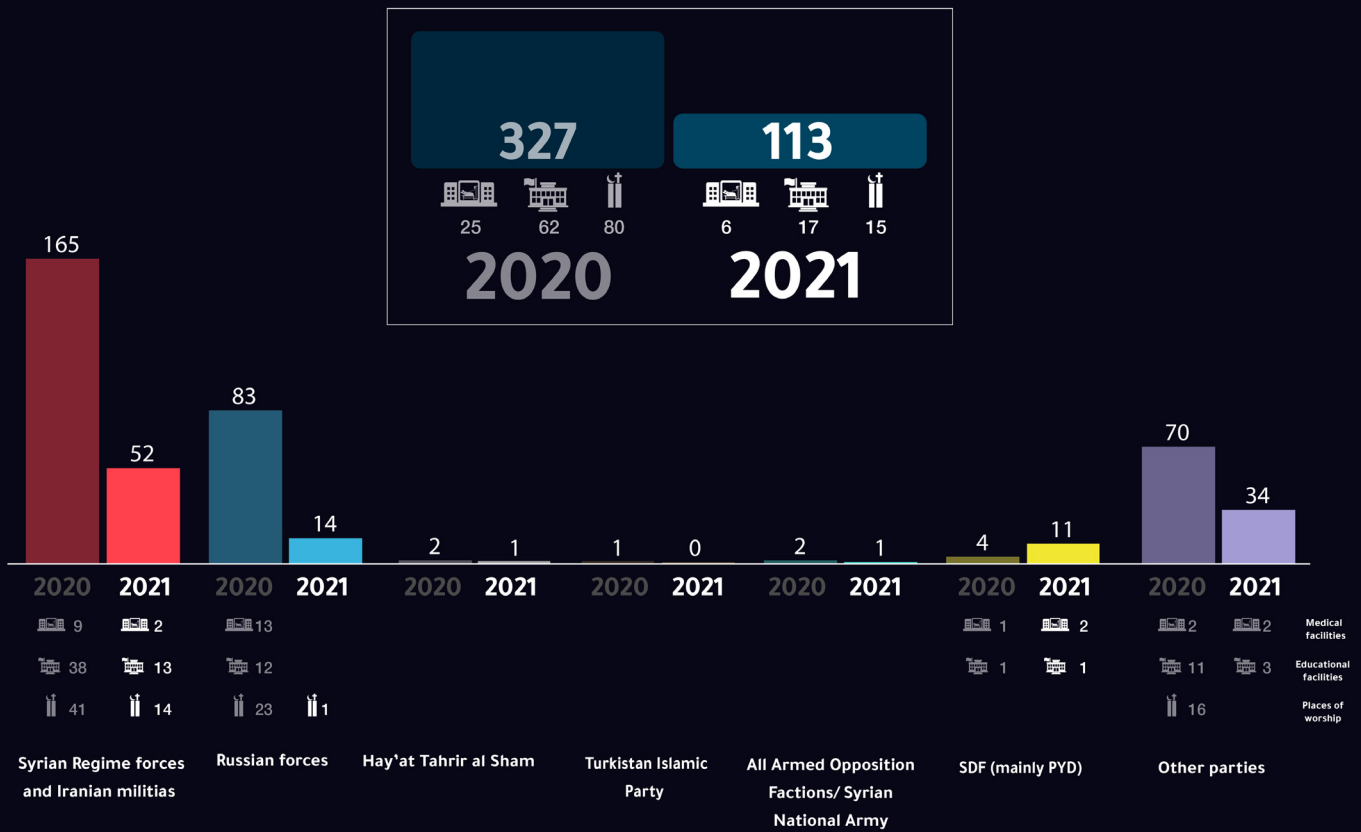


Comparison between **death tolls of media workers** killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021



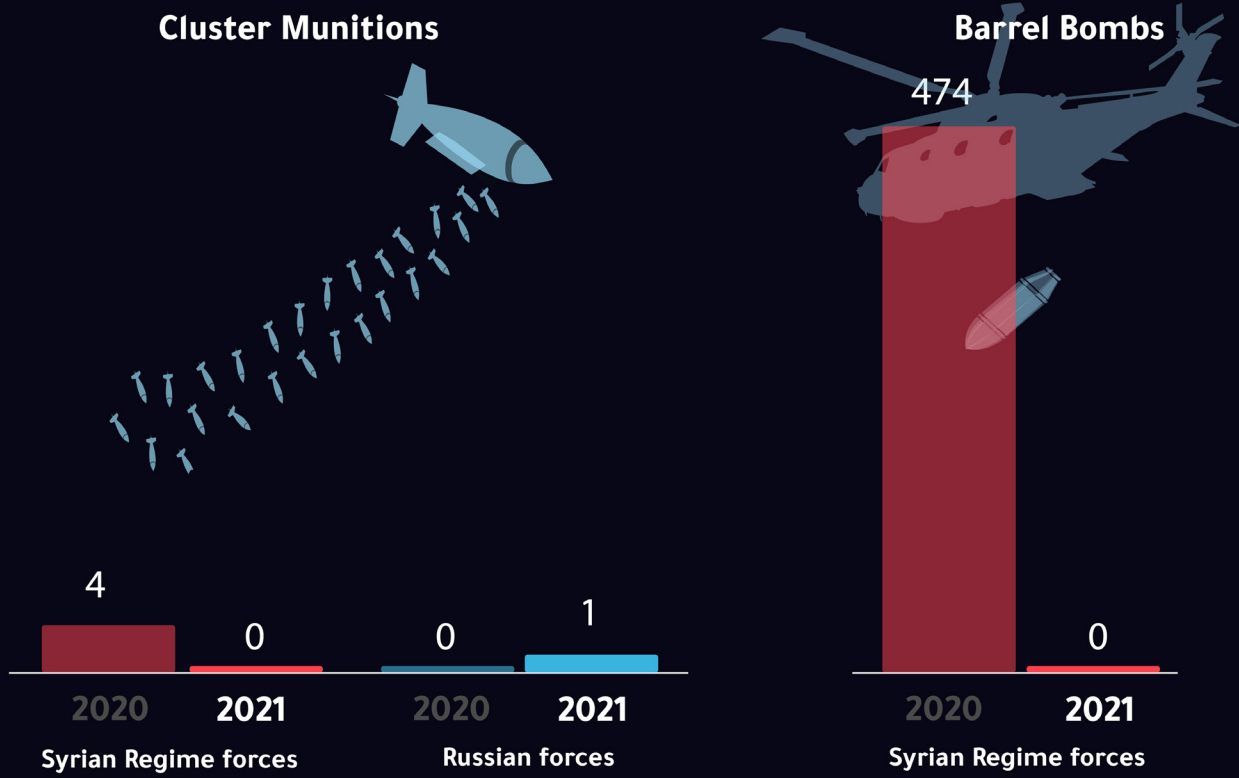


Comparison between records of attacks on vital civilian facilities carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021





Comparison between numbers of unlawful attacks carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria for 2020 and 2021



IV. Summarizing the Most Notable Human Rights Violations Committed by the Parties to the Conflict and the Controlling Forces in Syria in 2021:

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

1. Violations related to the treatment of civilians and hors de combat fighters

a. Massacres and other acts of extrajudicial killings:

The killing of civilians in Syria continued for the eleventh consecutive year in 2021, as it has done continuously since the outbreak of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011, resulting in casualty numbers that are among the largest worldwide; the ongoing nature of the crimes being perpetrated in Syria demonstrates the continuing instability of the situation in the country, and underlines the fact that it is still the most dangerous nation in the world for civilians, and remains an exceptionally insecure and perilous environment wholly unsuitable for the return of refugees. Although we documented that 2021 saw a decline in the rates of military operations by the Syrian regime's forces and allies in 2021 in general, many areas witnessed an escalation in combat operations, resulting in civilian deaths, mainly in the Idlib region, northwest of Syria, and in Daraa governorate. Also, deaths due to torture continued in the Syrian regime's detention centers.

In 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of 261 civilians, including 68 children and 32 women (adult female), as well five massacres, at the hands of Syrian regime forces.

The percentage of women and children among the total number of civilian victims is 34%, once again clearly indicating that Syrian regime forces continue to deliberately target civilians through indiscriminate shelling and executions.

In 2020, Syrian regime forces killed 432 civilians, including 79 children and 29 women (adult female), and committed 11 massacres.

– Most notable⁵ incidents of extrajudicial killing at the hands of Syrian Regime forces:

On Thursday, January 21, 2021, Saleh Ismail al Awaji, from Swaidan Jazira village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, was killed when Syrian regime forces personnel shot him dead in al Qouriya city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour. Al Qouriya city was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

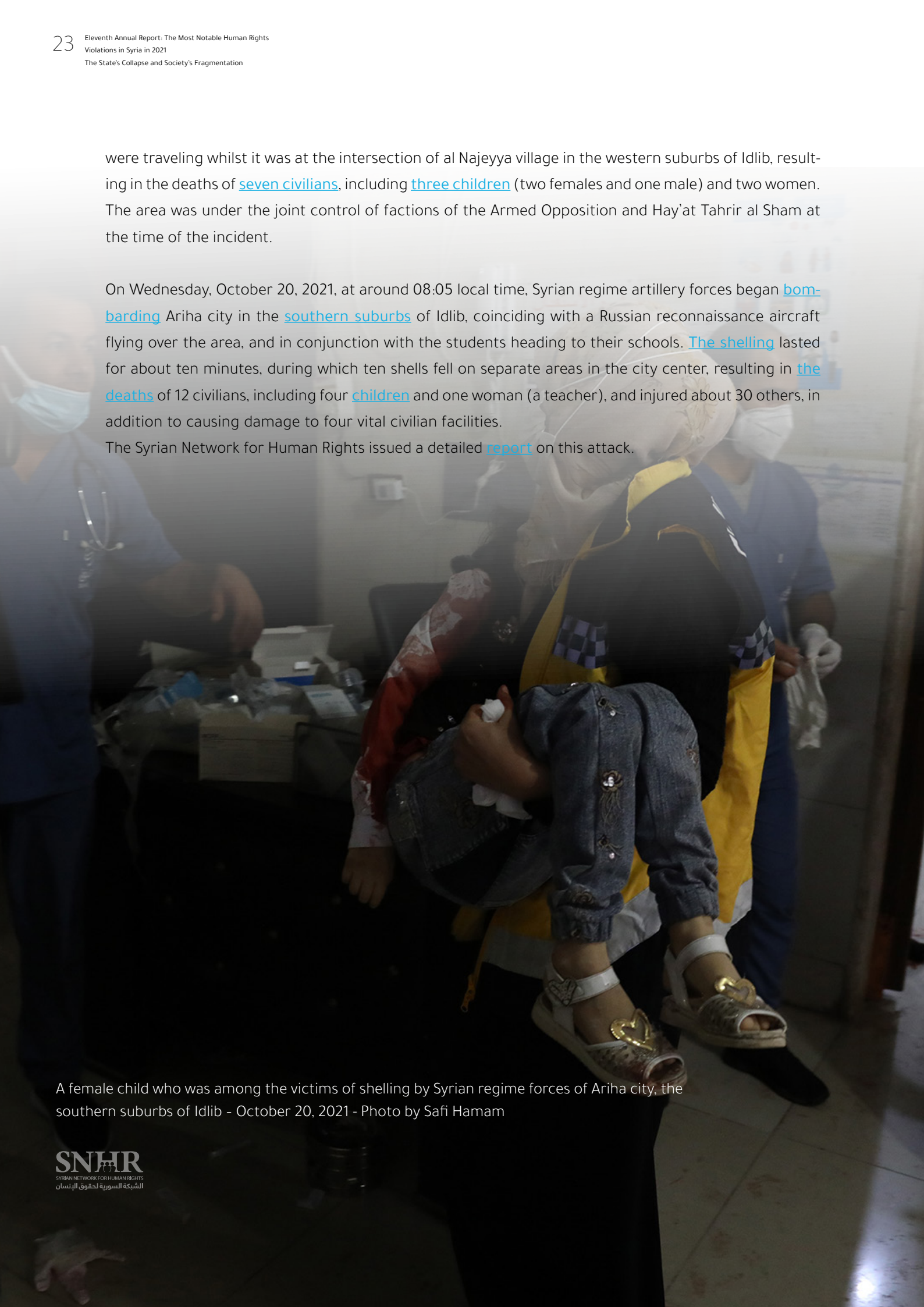
On Thursday, April 8, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces, stationed in Shellef Castle in the northern suburbs of Latakia, fired an MD-type anti-tank guided missile, targeting a car in which a number of civilians

⁵ Based on the database, we provide some examples of the most notable killings, taking into account the severity of the human and material losses, in addition to the type of weapon and the context of the incident.

were traveling whilst it was at the intersection of al Najeyya village in the western suburbs of Idlib, resulting in the deaths of [seven civilians](#), including [three children](#) (two females and one male) and two women. 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 Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at around 08:05 local time, Syrian regime artillery forces began [bombarding](#) Ariha city in the [southern suburbs](#) of Idlib, coinciding with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft flying over the area, and in conjunction with the students heading to their schools. [The shelling](#) lasted for about ten minutes, during which ten shells fell on separate areas in the city center, resulting in [the deaths](#) of 12 civilians, including four [children](#) and one woman (a teacher), and injured about 30 others, in addition to causing damage to four vital civilian facilities.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a detailed [report](#) on this attack.



A female child who was among the victims of shelling by Syrian regime forces of Ariha city, the southern suburbs of Idlib - October 20, 2021 - Photo by Safi Hamam

b. Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention:

Syrian regime forces have continued to persecute and target Syrian citizens in areas under regime control in connection with their political dissent and expression of opinions, despite the right to both being guaranteed by the Syrian constitution and international law. This proves once again the truth of the crucial point which we have reiterated several times previously, namely that no Syrian citizen can feel safe from arrests since these are carried out without any basis in law or any oversight by any independent judiciary, and are perpetrated by the security services with no involvement by the judiciary. Following these arrests, detainees are routinely classified as forcibly disappeared persons, and therefore the areas under the control of the Syrian regime cannot be considered to constitute any sort of safe haven for residents there; all this underlines that regime-controlled areas of Syria are very definitely not a safe haven for the return of refugees or IDPs.

At the beginning of January, the Syrian regime made a series of appointments and transfers of administrative positions and senior officers in several security branches in the Syrian governorates, and SNHR believes that these measures were the reason for the decrease in the number of arrests by the regime by the end of January; despite this, regime forces have continued to persecute and arrest individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status with the regime in areas that had previously concluded settlement agreements with it; these arrests have been concentrated in Aleppo, Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates, with these operations continuing throughout 2021, mostly taking place during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. We also documented widespread arrests, most of which were carried out by the regime's criminal security branches spread across Syrian governorates, targeting pro-regime media workers and civilians, including university students, lawyers and state employees, over their criticism of the difficult living conditions and the regime's governmental corruption in the areas controlled by the Syrian regime, with a series of other charges brought against them related to the cybercrime law, and with most of those arrested being imprisoned in Adra Central Prison in Damascus governorate.

In 2021, Syrian regime forces arrested Syrian citizens, all civilians, in connection with their efforts to migrate illegally by sea and via multiple land border crossings. Those arrested included children, women and people who had previously settled their security status. We also documented arrests targeting civilians while they were visiting the Immigration and Passports offices in Syrian cities to obtain documents related to traveling abroad. In addition, we recorded nearly 218 arrests of returnees (refugees and IDPs) to areas under the control of Syrian regime forces, including seven children and six women.

In conjunction with the 'presidential elections' held unilaterally by the Syrian regime in May, we documented arrests targeting civilians on the grounds that they did not participate in these '[elections](#)', while they were passing through the Syrian regime checkpoints, mainly those adjacent to areas that had previously seen settlements. These arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Aleppo, Hama and Damascus Suburbs, where civilians were detained at checkpoints and in some cases were taken to security branches. We documented the release of most of these detainees hours after their arrest, when they had been subjected to beatings and humiliation.

2021 also saw arrests targeting [journalists](#), as well as family members of activists in the popular uprising and of dissidents of the Syrian regime, as well as random arrests targeting civilians, including elderly people, women and children, concentrated in many areas of Daraa governorate in connection with the deteriorating security conditions and the residents' rejection of the regime forces' security presence in their areas.

In addition, 2021 saw arrests on various grounds, including exchanging or receiving foreign currency and traveling and moving between areas under regime control and others controlled by other parties to the conflict.

In terms of releases from prisons and detention centers in 2021, we recorded that Syrian regime forces released at least 691 individuals, including 55 children and 36 women, distributed according to their background as follows:

- 343 individuals - most of them from the governorates of Daraa and Damascus Suburbs - were released in the context of the reconciliation and settlement agreements carried out by the Syrian regime in both governorates. According to family members and friends of the released individuals, and to the information recorded on our database, the former detainees spent an average period of one to three years in the Syrian regime's detention centers.
- 218 individuals were released from civil prisons in various governorates, after the end of their arbitrarily imposed sentences, with their release not being linked to the Amnesty Decree No. 13 of 2021. According to family members and friends of the released individuals, and to the information recorded on our database, the former detainees spent an average period of one to nine years in the Syrian regime's detention centers.
- 24 individuals were released from the security branches without having undergone any trials, following detention for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to two months.
- 106 individuals were released from detention centers in connection with the issuance of the Amnesty Decree No. 13 of 2021. We issued [a special report](#) on the decree and on documenting the arrest of more people than those who were released by the Syrian regime under the amnesty decree alone.

The released detainees spent their periods of arrest/ detention in extremely poor conditions which included being subjected to torture, and endured an almost complete lack of healthcare and medical care, along with severe overcrowding; all had been arrested without receiving any explanation of the reasons for their detention and without any arrest warrants being provided.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights team documented the arbitrary arrest of at least 1,032 individuals, including 19 children and 23 women, by Syrian regime forces in 2021; of these, 146 individuals were released, most of whom had not undergone any trial, with many of those detained being conscripted into military service, while at least 886 individuals, including 11 women and nine children, were forcibly disappeared. This contrasts with the previous year, 2020, when SNHR documented the arbitrary arrest of at least 908 individuals, including 23 women and 13 children, by Syrian regime forces in 2020. The significant increase in the number of arrests in 2021 compared to 2020 can be attributed to the Syrian regime forces' dedication to hunting down regime opponents and dissidents after the severity of the military confrontations subsided, with the aim of continuing to terrorize and threaten society against any expression of opposition, particularly in the context of deteriorating economic and living conditions, and not to demand any political reforms.

- Examples of the most notable incidents and cases of unlawful detention:

Waddah Muhi al Din, the office manager of the 'Buq'aat Daw' (Spotlight) magazine in Aleppo city, born in 1955, from Aleppo city, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in the city on January 9, 2021, after he criticized robberies taking place in the city's markets on his Facebook account, and taken to the Criminal Security branch in Damascus city. He was released in accordance with Amnesty Decree No. 13 of 2021 issued on May 2, 2021, for those who committed offenses, misdemeanors and felonies.



Waddah Muhi al Din

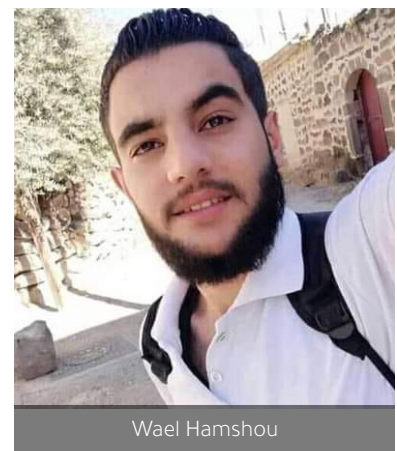


Screenshot of the Facebook post in which Waddah Muhi al Din criticized robberies taking place in Aleppo city's markets

On Thursday, May 27, 2021, the Syrian regime's Air Security Force and State Security Force personnel carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in the neighborhoods of Bustan al Qasr and al Kallasa in Aleppo city. SNHR documented the arrest of 14 civilians over their opposition and refusal to participate in the 'presidential elections' that took place on May 26, with all being taken to an undisclosed location. The raid was accompanied by regime forces destroying shops in the neighborhoods.

Two children, brothers Omran and Omier Mar'i Hasan Abazid, aged 15 and 14 respectively, from Ataman city in the north of Daraa governorate, were arrested along with their father by Syrian regime Military Security Force personnel on Monday, June 7, 2021, during a raid on their home in the village, and taken to an undisclosed location.

Wael Hamshou, a student at Damascus University's Petroleum Engineering faculty, born in 1999, from Lahtha village in north Suwayda governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces personnel on Wednesday, October 27, 2021, while he was passing through one of the regime checkpoints near Hasyaa town in the southern suburbs of Homs governorate, in connection with his participation in a protest criticizing the poor living conditions in Suwayda city in 2020. We documented that he was released on October 30, 2021.



Wael Hamshou

Photos of detainees released by Syrian regime forces show the effects of the gross neglect of medical and health care during their detention:

On Saturday, June 19, 2021, the Syrian regime released 32 detainees, all of them from Damascus Suburbs governorate, from its detention centers in Damascus governorate. The release was the result of a reconciliation process carried out by the Syrian regime in Damascus Suburbs governorate.

The Syrian regime gathered all the detainees being released in a bus before releasing them in Kafr Batna town square in Damascus Suburbs governorate. The photos show the clear deterioration in the health conditions of the gaunt released prisoners.



Photo of the released detainee Muhammad Serdar before his re-arrest and enforced disappearance in 2018



Photo of Muhammad Serdar after his release in 2021

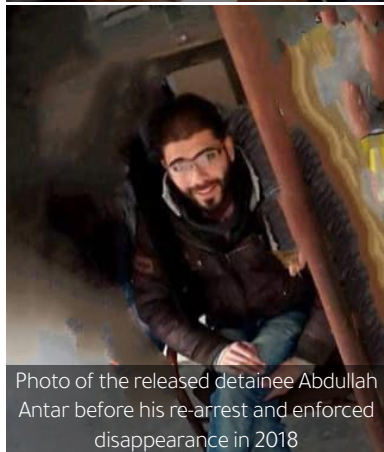


Photo of the released detainee Abdullah Antar before his re-arrest and enforced disappearance in 2018

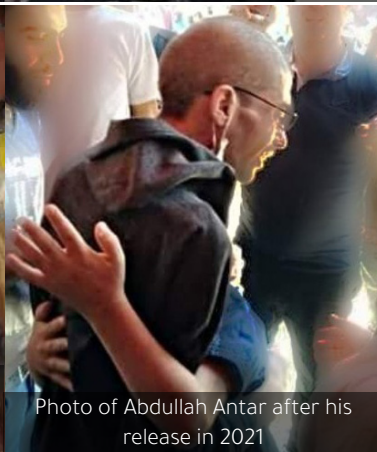


Photo of Abdullah Antar after his release in 2021

c. Torture in detention centers:

All arrests and enforced disappearances carried out by Syrian regime forces have been accompanied by torture, which begins from the first moment of arrest and continues throughout the period of detention and enforced disappearance in various forms and methods, all of which are widespread and deliberately practiced in all detention centers. In a previous detailed report, SNHR documented the most notable torture methods used by Syrian regime forces in the regime's detention centers and military hospitals, [detailing 72 methods](#) of physical, psychological and sexual torture, with torture affecting all detainees, including women, children, the elderly, disabled, invalids and people with special needs, excluding no-one. Torture often reaches exceptionally violent stages during the interrogation of the detainee with the aim of retaliating against him/her or extracting confessions and information under torture. In many cases,

torture acts have assumed a sectarian and region-based character, whereby the detainee is tortured simply because he or she belongs to an area whose population is known for opposing the Syrian regime, or merely for belonging to a certain sect. This abuse also coincides with intentional negligence towards detainees' healthcare, as well as starvation, and grotesquely unsanitary conditions of detention which lack the most basic hygiene and ventilation, as well as additional degrading treatment such as human stacking of detainees in narrow, cramped, airless cells unsuited to accommodating the large and increasing numbers of detainees crammed into them, in addition to depriving the detainee of clothes and blankets in extremely low or high temperatures, with these barbaric conditions that the detainee may suffer from and endure for many years leading to a rising death toll due to torture and neglect of healthcare, causing almost daily deaths among detainees.

In most cases, the Syrian regime does not inform its victims' families of their death in the detention center on the date of their death, with families instead learning of the death of their loved ones either through survivors of the detention centers or after they visit the military police headquarters in Damascus several times, or through the Civil Registry departments; families often get this harrowing information several years after the date of the detainees' death; we have recorded at least seven individuals whose deaths were discovered by their loved ones through their families' visit to the Civil Registry departments in the Syrian governorates in 2021. The families of most of these individuals confirmed to us that their deceased relatives were in good health when they were arrested, leading us to believe that they died due to torture and lack of healthcare, except for a small number of them who died as a result of death sentences issued by the Military Field Courts.

In 2021, the SNHR team documented the deaths of at least 78 individuals, including one child, due to torture and lack of healthcare at the hands of Syrian regime forces, compared to 130 individuals who were documented as having died as a result of torture at the hands of Syrian regime forces in 2020.

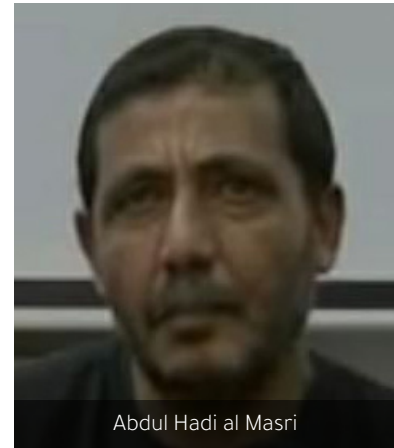
– **Examples of the most notable deaths due to torture and lack of healthcare:**

Azad Abdul Qader Souran, born in 1986, from Khuleilkou village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in May 2021, as he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints in Aleppo city. Almost since that time, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Monday, July 19, 2021, the Syrian regime's Political Security Force personnel notified his family of his death and instructed them to retrieve his body from Aleppo University Hospital in Aleppo city. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he most probably died due to torture in the Political Security Branch in Aleppo city.



Azad Abdul Qader Souran

Abdul Hadi al Masri, from the Bab al Sbaa neighborhood of Homs city, was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Thursday, July 21, 2011, during a raid on his home in the neighborhood. Following his arrest, Abdul Hadi was transferred to a number of different prisons during his detention, with the last prison being Homs Central Prison in Homs city. On Friday, October 22, 2021, Syrian regime forces informed his family of his death in Homs Central Prison due to infection with the COVID-19 coronavirus. We can also confirm that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



d. Violations of children's rights:

Children in Syria are subjected to many constant and repeated types of violations, varying in severity and prevalence, which have serious present and future repercussions for every Syrian child. At the Syrian Network for Human Rights, we focus on categories of grave and life-threatening violations identified by the United Nations Security Council, which we work tirelessly to document, always using our rigorous methodology. The killing of children is the greatest of these violations and the most severe in Syria due to the high percentage of child victims, with the second being arrest/abduction, which in the vast majority of cases turns into enforced disappearance, followed by torture. We also focus on child recruitment, attacks on educational centers, etc. and on the resulting abandonment of education and falling behind in the educational process.

You can read our latest report, which was issued on World Children's Day, entitled "[Tenth Annual Report on Violations against Children in Syria](#)", in which we documented the most notable violations of children's rights in Syria, especially in 2021.

A 13-year-old child, [Ahmad Karmou al Yousef](#), from al Abzeimo town in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, was killed on Saturday, May 8, 2021, when Syrian regime artillery forces fired mortar shells at the eastern outskirts of al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo, which was under the control of the armed opposition/ Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 06:00 local time, Syrian regime artillery forces, working in coordination with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft, fired several shells targeting a house belonging to one of the Civil Defense personnel in the northeast of Balyoun village in Jabal al Zaweya, the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in [the deaths of two sister children](#), and injuring their parents, in addition to causing massive destruction to the house; when Civil Defense teams arrived to evacuate the injured and retrieve the dead, the same artillery forces shelled the same location, without inflicting more casualties. Balyoun village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

We contacted Hussam al Sheikh⁶, a team leader at the Syrian Civil Defense Center in Balyoun village in Jabal al Zaweya, who went to the site of the incident and helped retrieve the victims:

“The house of our colleague in the Civil Defense, Omar al Omar, in Balyoun village was bombarded. I went to the site, where I found Omar and his wife looking for their children. Their situation was deplorable, as the reconnaissance aircraft was in the air, his children were under the rubble and he was slightly injured. We pulled out the body of a girl before we heard through the walkie-talkie that a shell had been launched from the side of Kafranbel. I asked the team to evacuate the site immediately, and as we expected, the second shell landed in the same location, an accurate Krasnopol shell.” Hussam added that they returned to the site after the second shell fell and worked for many hours: **“Finally, we were able to find the body of his second daughter, badly disfigured, on the outskirts of the site, and we buried them.”**

On Thursday, July 22, 2021, artillery forces, stationed in areas controlled by Syrian regime forces in the southern suburbs of Idlib, in conjunction with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft overflying the area, fired a number of shells, targeting a house in the southern outskirts of Ebleen village, on the Balyoun village road, in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting in the deaths of seven civilians from one family](#), including [four children](#) and one woman, and injured seven others. Ebleen village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Victims killed in a ground attack by Syrian regime forces targeting the south of Ebleen village in the southern suburbs of Idlib - July 22, 2021

⁶ We contacted him via WhatsApp on July 28, 2021

e. Violations of women's rights:

Women were subjected to multiple patterns of grave violations that targeted them directly and were doubly affected by the repercussions of the violations that affected Syrian society as a whole. Violence against women has increasingly escalated, with many associated violations reaching record levels, especially killing, torture, enforced disappearance and sexual violence, increasing to rates that are the worst in the world and constitute an additional tragedy for Syrian society, which has suffered unimaginable loss, grief and trauma for nearly eleven years, during which the basic rights of Syrian women have continued to be violated at the civil, political, social, economic, health, and psychological levels, with the country's women, through the loss of family breadwinners, losing the protection and shield from the repercussions of the conflict, with this situation extending to imposing additional burdens on them in an already unstable society, exposing them to forced displacement, frequent displacement, and restrictions on their rights to work and movement. Despite the fact that most international charters and covenants, such as the Geneva Convention and the Additional Protocols, international humanitarian law, and the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights have accorded special protection to women in their articles, in all circumstances and despite their increased vulnerability, Syrian women still do not enjoy the lowest levels of protection and security, with violations of their rights being frequently practiced against them with impunity due to their gender. You can read our latest report, "[Tenth Annual Report on Violations against Females in Syria](#)", in which we documented the most notable violations and incidents to which women in Syria were subjected, especially in 2021.

On the evening of Tuesday, September 7, 2021, [Joud Yaser Sharrit](#) was killed by Syrian regime artillery forces who fired several shells at al Dabeit neighborhood in the west of Idlib city. Joud, aged 21, who held an MA degree in Psychology, was the head of al Seraj al Munir Kindergarten for Memorizing the Holy Quran. The area was under the control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, October 1, 2021, Syrian regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a missile at a gathering of IDP tents in Batenta village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the death of Ms. Fatimah Shlash, from Hwair al Eys village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo. Batenta village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

2. Violations Concerning the Conduct of Hostilities:

a. Military operations and unlawful attacks:

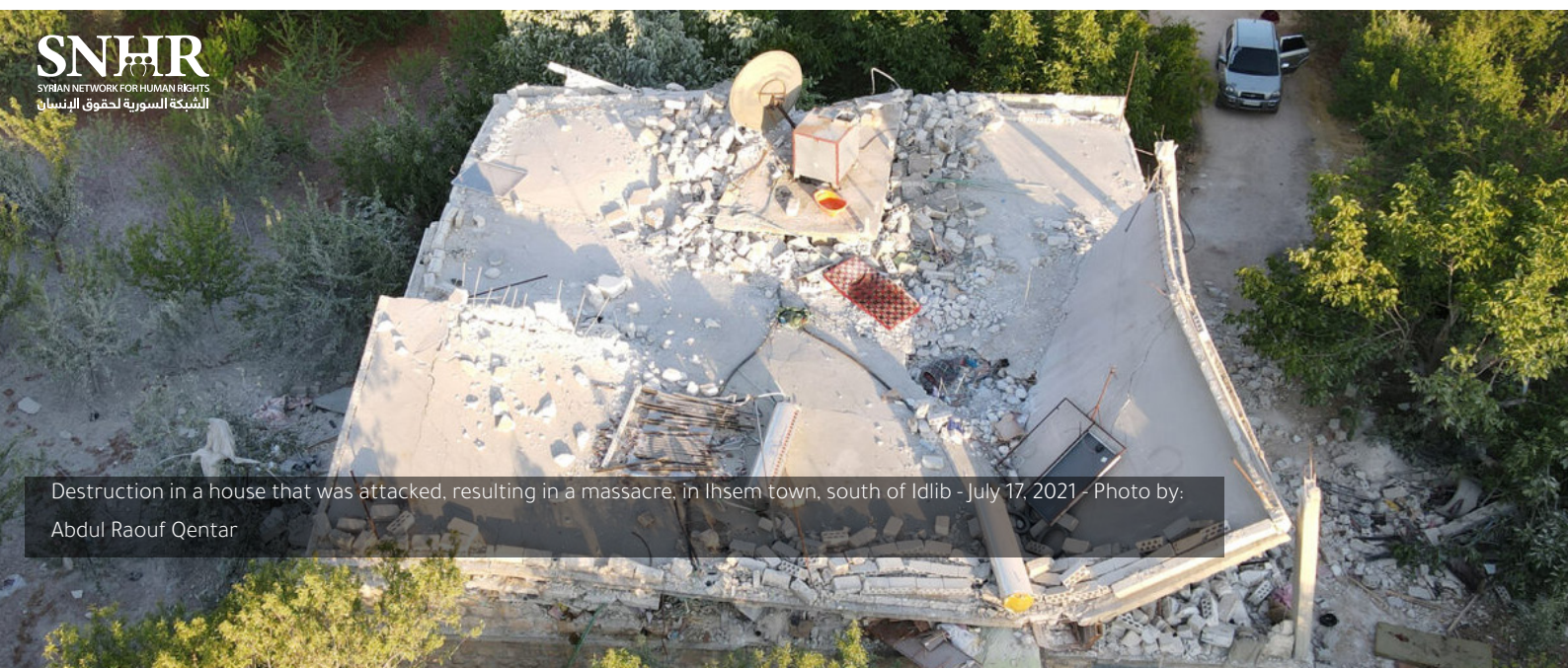
1. Artillery and aerial attacks:

Syrian regime forces relied mainly on ground attacks in their various military operations launched during 2021. The second half of the year also witnessed a military escalation in Daraa governorate, while the Idlib region in northwestern Syria witnessed another military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces. We noticed that these attacks targeted populated areas and caused the death of civilians and damage to vital civilian facilities.

During 2021, we also recorded an intensive deployment of higher-quality weapons in terms of their accuracy in hitting the target and in the great destruction caused to the target site due to their being laser circuit-guided, with the Syrian-Russian alliance forces again deploying munitions whose use hadn't been previously documented in the Syrian conflict. Additionally, we also faced great difficulty in definitively identifying the party responsible for some of the attacks, being unable to ascertain whether Russia or the Syrian regime bore responsibility, due to the presence of some launching platforms belonging to the Syrian regime, and others belonging to Russia, with these platforms being transferred between different locations. We discussed this in [our report issued on September 9, 2021](#).

Among the most prominent features distinguishing 2021 from the preceding years was that no barrel bomb attacks were recorded during the year, although we documented a total of at least 474 barrel bombs in 2021, dropped by the Syrian regime's helicopters and fixed-wing warplanes in various Syrian governorates.

On Saturday, July 17, 2021, at around 22:50 local time, a two-storey house, located on the northern outskirts of Ihsem town in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was hit by a shell, whose source hasn't yet been identified by SNHR as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being either Syrian regime forces or Russian forces, as the shelling emanating from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to identify the party responsible for the attack.



Destruction in a house that was attacked, resulting in a massacre, in Ihsem town, south of Idlib - July 17, 2021 - Photo by:
Abdul Raouf Qentar

[The attack](#) resulted in [the deaths of nine civilians](#) from one family, namely five female children and four women, including a nurse, and the injury of nearly seven other civilians, mostly women and children, in addition to extensive destruction to the house. Ihsem town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, August 11, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at a wooded area near Barza village in the northern suburbs of Latakia governorate, resulting in the death of Ibrahim Eisa al Hajji, from Sallet al Zuhour village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was collecting firewood in the area, which was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, November 28, 2021, artillery forces, stationed in areas under the control of the Syrian regime, fired a number of shells at Kafr Ta'al village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the death of Muhammad Ibrahim al Muhammad and injured others. The area was under the control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, December 2, 2021, artillery forces, stationed in areas under the control of the Syrian regime, fired a shell hitting a house in the east of Binnesh city in the northern suburbs of Idlib, killing a female child, named as Nour Saddam al Atrash, and injuring her family members, in addition to partially damaging the structure of the house. The area was under the control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

2. Siege and threats of military operations:

In 2021, Syrian regime forces continued their policy of besieging and storming areas to force their residents to sign settlement agreements, submit to their terms and forcibly displace their residents; these operations were focused this year on southern Syria.

At the beginning of June, following the announcement of the results of the 'presidential elections', the people of Daraa governorate took to the streets for peaceful public demonstrations in several areas of the governorate expressing their rejection of these elections. As a result, on June 23, the Syrian regime demanded that the people of Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city hand over weapons. The next day, Syrian regime forces closed the roads leading to the area and restricted the movement of civilians to and from the area. The Syrian regime continued its siege of the Daraa al Balad area and the neighborhoods of Tareeq al Sadd and the Camps in Daraa city. On July 4, Syrian regime forces closed the only road leading to the area, obstructed the entry of food and medical supplies to the area, and imposed strict restrictions on the movement of residents' entry and exit; on July 27, Syrian regime forces stormed the al Shayyah area in the southern plains of the Daraa al Balad area, and the Gharz area in the eastern part of the city, before they escalated their operations after they encountered resistance from fighters from the area, bombarding several areas in the governorate.

The Syrian regime continued to besiege the neighborhoods of Daraa city (Daraa al Balad area and the neighborhoods of Tareeq al Sadd and the Camps) until September 5, when an agreement was reached with Russia and the regime's security committee to put an end to the military escalation in the city, which entered into force on the second day. The new agreement included several terms, most notably settling the status of individuals wanted by the Syrian regime, the deployment of nine military posts inside the neighborhoods of Daraa al Balad and Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood, the withdrawal of military reinforcements affiliated with Syrian regime forces from the vicinity of Daraa city, and the lifting of the siege completely from the area after implementing the terms of the agreement, without addressing the issue of detainees and the forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime from the people of the governorate. [We issued](#) two detailed [reports](#) in this regard.

b. Specifically protected individuals and objects

1. Medical sector:

Despite the decline in the level of the Syrian regime and its Russian ally's bombardment of medical centers, the medical sector has not recovered from concentrated targeting over the past ten years; dozens of medical centers bombarded by the Syrian/Russian alliance remain out of service, and thousands of medical personnel are still forcibly disappeared, with workers in this sensitive field continuing to migrate abroad, even as the COVID-19 pandemic increases the material and logistical burdens on this sector.

In 2021, we documented the deaths of at least one medical worker, as well as at least two attacks on hospitals and other medical points; in 2020, we documented the deaths of nine medical personnel, and at least nine attacks on hospitals and other medical points by Syrian regime forces.

[Maryam Barakat](#), a nurse from Mhambel town in Idlib suburbs, who worked at the 'Save A Soul' Hospital in Salqin city, was killed on Saturday, July 17, 2021, when the house she was in, located on the northern outskirts of Ihsem town - on the main road between Ihsem and Mar'yan village - in the southern suburbs of Idlib, was hit with an artillery shell, resulting in a massacre, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being Syrian regime forces or Russian forces, given that the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to identify the party responsible for the shelling. We note that the attack coincided with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft flying over the area.

The attacks on medical facilities

On Sunday, March 21, 2021, at around 08:20 local time, artillery forces which we believe were stationed at a site controlled by the Lebanese Hezbollah militias near Majbal al Zeft in Urm al Sughra village in the western suburbs of Aleppo fired three Krasnopol shells (laser-guided mortar shells by a drone that draws a laser circle on the target to direct the shell towards the circle drawn⁷) at [al Atareb Surgical Hospital](#) (Al Maghara Hospital) ⁸- supported by the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) - located in [al Atareb](#) city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which was established within a cave in a mountainous

⁷ It is owned by Syrian regime forces and pro-regime militias. Russian media sources [reported](#) for the first time that it was used by Syrian regime forces in February 2020.

⁸ The hospital consists of two blocks, one of them inside a cave, which is the block that was attacked

area on the Abzemou Road in the north of the city; [one of the shells](#) fell at [the hospital's](#) entrance [directly](#), causing [significant material](#) damage to the [external hospital](#) structure, as well [as damaging](#) the orthopedic clinics in the ambulance department, the patient waiting hall inside the hospital building, a tent for isolating COVID-19 patients, a generator, and a maintenance caravan outside the building, putting the hospital out of service, [in addition](#) to causing severe material damage to [an ambulance](#) belonging to the hospital. The Syrian Network for Human Rights' Victim Department team documented the deaths of eight civilians in this attack, including one child and one woman, [and the injury of about 17 others, including five of the hospital's medical staff](#). Al Atareb city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights believe that the Syrian regime and Russian forces bear responsibility for this attack, as some witnesses who were at the site of the attack confirmed that Russian reconnaissance aircraft had flown over the site before and during the bombing, and later Russian media outlets published a video of the moment the hospital was targeted.



The laser guidance circuit for the Krasnopol shells used in bombing al Maghara Hospital - March 21, 2021

We note that the hospital, established since 2018 in an area far from residential areas and in an area devoid of any military presence, consists of departments of general surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics and midwifery, otolaryngology, and ambulance services, and provides medical services to nearly 100,000 citizens, receiving an average of approximately 4,500 patients per month. The Syrian American Medical Society issued a [statement](#) about the incident on its official website, in which it indicated that the hospital was put out of service as a result of the targeting.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a detailed [report](#) on this attack.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights spoke with Muhammad Hallaq⁹, the head of the Civil Defense team in al Atareb city, who told us that on the morning of Sunday, March 21, they received a report about artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces targeting al Maghara Hospital in the northeast of the city: **“The hospital was 4 km away from our center. We headed there directly, and upon our arrival we found more than 15 wounded men, women and children, some of them hospital staff, on the ground at the entrance to the hospital. We began aiding the wounded - some of them had been transferred to the hospital and their aid operations began before our arrival - and retrieving the victims.”** Muhammad also explained that most of the victims died while receiving medical treatment for their wounds.



Destruction caused by a ground attack on al Atareb Surgical Hospital in al Atareb city, Aleppo, - March 21, 2021 - Taken by Ibrahim al Khatib

⁹ Via WhatsApp on March 21, 2021

On Wednesday, September 8, 2021, Jabal al Zaweya' medical center, which was known as the Mar'yan Medical center located in Mar'yan village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was subject to a ground attack with two shells whose source SNHR hasn't yet been able to identify as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being Russian or Syrian regime forces, since the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to specifically identify the party responsible for the attack.

The attack [resulted](#) in [casualties](#), as [well as severely](#) damaging the [medical center's](#) structure, and causing significant [material damage](#) to its [equipment](#) and [supplies](#). As [a result](#), the center was put out of service. Mar'yan village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



2. Educational sector:

In 2021, we documented at least 13 attacks on educational facilities (schools and kindergartens), while in 2020, we documented at least 38 such attacks by Syrian regime forces. In 2021, we also documented the Syrian regime continuing to turn some educational facilities into military headquarters, especially in the areas it regained control over in 2019 and 2020.



A photo shared widely online on February 15, 2021, shows that the Syrian regime's al Ba'ath Brigade seized control of the Abdul Majid Haj Bakri Primary School in Khan Sheikhoun city in Idlib suburbs and converted it into a military headquarters affiliated with the brigade.



This photo, published in January 2021, shows members of the Syrian regime's Tarameeh militia using a school in the suburbs of Ma'aret al Numan as a military headquarters (Tarameeh Militia's member Haider Na'san, who is from Qamhana, is seen in the photo).

The Syrian regime's targeting of the educational sector was not limited to bombing educational facilities outside its areas of control, and misusing some of them for military purposes in its areas of control. The Syrian regime's violations against the educational sector also extends to distorting educational curricula, similar to other brutal dictatorships, building the education system around veneration and blind loyalty to Bashar al Assad and his father, Hafez al Assad, in the curricula that the regime changed in 2017, knowing that it was changed in 2010; a large number of teachers have told us about the Syrian regime's re-

lentless efforts to indoctrinate children with a doctrine of absolute submission to Bashar al Assad which incorporates hate speech and accusations of treason against all dissidents opposing the Assad regime; this year, we noticed that this indoctrination was not limited to classes on nationalism, history, and the Arabic language, but extended across the syllabus to various educational subjects, under the guidance and monitoring of the regime security services.

On Thursday, January 14, 2021, Syrian regime forces used [a missile](#) launcher to shell the Martyr Muhammad al Sabbagh School in Ariha city in [the southern suburbs](#) of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying](#) the school structure. 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.



Damage caused by a ground attack by Syrian regime forces on the Martyr Muhammad al Sabbagh School in Ariha city, Idlib - January 14, 2021

On Tuesday, August 31, 2021, Syrian regime forces used heavy artillery and missile launchers to shell the elementary school in al Bhar neighborhood in Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city, [partially damaging](#) the school's structure and perimeter wall, and causing [moderate material](#) damage to its furniture. The area was under the military control of armed opposition fighters at the time of the incident, under the terms of a Russian local agreement with them.

3. Places of worship:

Syrian regime forces failed to observe the sanctity of places of worship, including mosques, churches, and similar locations. The Syrian regime has targeted places of worship, especially mosques, with concentrated bombardment in areas outside its control, and transformed many places of worship in areas under its control into headquarters of a military nature.

In 2021, we documented at least 14 attacks on places of worship by Syrian regime forces, while we documented at least 41 attacks on them in 2020.

On Saturday, January 23, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces, stationed in the so-called security zone in al Qameshli city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, fired a mortar shell at the Haklou neighborhood in the city. The shell landed near the [Sheikh al Shuhadaa Muhammad Ma'shouq al Khaznawi Mosque](#), known as al Sheikh Ma'shouq Mosque, causing moderate material damage to the mosque's yard and walls. Haklou neighborhood is located within the area of Qameshli city under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces.

At dawn on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, Syrian regime forces used tanks to fire shells at the Dr. Ghassan Abazid Mosque in al Manshiya neighborhood in the Daraa al Balad area of Daraa city, [partially destroying](#) the [mosque's](#) structure and [causing](#) severe [material damage](#) to the furniture inside. The area is militarily subject to control by armed opposition fighters according to a Russian local agreement with them.

On Sunday, September 5, 2021, Syrian regime forces used a missile launcher to target [al Omari Mosque](#) in Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city, [partially damaging](#) its [structure](#), as [well](#) as [causing](#) moderate [material damage](#) to its [furnishings](#). The area is militarily subject to control by armed opposition fighters under the terms of a Russian local agreement with them.



Destruction and material damage caused by a ground attack by Syrian regime forces on Dr. Ghassan Abazid Mosque in al Manshiya neighborhood, Daraa - August 17, 2021

4. Media workers:

Syria still ranks among the bottom nations globally in terms of press freedom (ranked 173 out of 180 countries), according to [the 2021 World Press Freedom Index](#), published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on April 19; RSF also stated in another report issued on December 14 that Syria is still one of the three deadliest countries for media workers, as it has been throughout the past five years, with the [organization](#) adding that 44 of the (at least) 65 journalists and media workers detained around the world were kidnapped in Syria.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights has endeavored, since the start of its work, to document the violations committed against media personnel, including killing, arrest, injury and harassment, both through documenting these incidents in the daily news reports and in issuing [monthly reports](#) and [special reports](#) that record these violations committed by all the parties to the conflict in Syria.

The Syrian regime is again responsible for the largest percentage of the total violations against the media sector, which is characterized by a total ban on independent media, and the lack of freedom of opinion and expression in the areas it controls.

c. Use of prohibited weapons

1. Cluster Munitions:

In 2021, the SNHR was unable to document any cluster munition attacks by Syrian regime forces, while SNHR documented at least four cluster munition attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces in 2020.

B. Russian forces

Russian forces are deployed in many military centers in several Syrian governorates. Russia bases the supposed legitimacy of its intervention in Syria on the grounds that it came at the request of the Syrian regime. We have refuted these allegations in many annual reports that we issue on the anniversaries of the Russian military intervention, showing that Russia is responsible for bombing Syrian areas and killing Syrian civilians and fighters opposing the Syrian regime. Neither was the Russian role limited to a military one, far exceeding this to include defending the Syrian regime at various United Nations bodies, primarily the Security Council, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and through media. We detailed this [extensively in the sixth annual report on the Russian military intervention in Syria](#).

In 2021, we noticed a decrease in the Russian air forces' attacks, while these forces intensified ground attacks in conjunction with the flight of reconnaissance aircraft, using munitions that we had not previously recorded since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, as well as intensifying their use of the highly accurate Krasnopol munitions that have a horrendously destructive impact. We note that the bombing using ground platforms differs from aerial bombardment, as we can often identify aerial attacks by Russian warplanes according to the shape of the warplane, the type of munitions used, and other factors, while in the case of ground bombardment, the process of identifying the perpetrators and assigning responsibility to a particular party, whether this is the Syrian regime or Russia, is more complicated, even if the responsibility is largely shared between the Russian forces or Syrian regime forces, which are partners in an alliance and bear joint responsibility, with the majority of the Syrian regime's weapons being Russian, and the Syrian regime being the party that brought about the Russian military intervention.



Remnants of a Krasnopol circuit-guided shell used by Russian forces in a ground attack on Balshoun village - August 19, 2021 -
Photo by: Ahmad Rahhal



Remnants of a munition used in a Russian/ Syrian regime ground attack on Ihsem town - July 17, 2021 - Photo by: Kenana Hindawi

a. Extrajudicial killing

We documented the deaths of 65 civilians, including 32 children and seven women (adult female), killed by Russian forces in 2021, as well as four massacres perpetrated by Russian forces. In 2020, we documented the deaths of 211 civilians, including 62 children and 48 women (adult female), killed by Russian forces, as well as 11 massacres perpetrated by Russian forces.

– Examples of the most notable extrajudicial killings:

On Saturday, June 12, 2021, at around 11:45, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at the outskirts of Mentef village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of [a female child and an unborn baby](#), who was extracted from his injured mother's womb at al Shami Hospital in Ariha city, having sustained fatal head injuries. The bombing also injured six other civilians. 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.

On Thursday, July 15, 2021, Russian artillery forces, [stationed](#) in the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces, in conjunction with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft overflying the area, fired a shell targeting a group of workers who were cutting rocks, near the al Manar family's swimming pool in [the outskirts](#) of al Fou'a town in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting](#) in [the deaths](#) of [six civilian](#) workers, [including](#) three [children](#). [Al Fou'a town](#) was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, September 3, 2021, [fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired](#) a number of missiles at a block factory (not in operation), in the eastern outskirts of Kansafra village in the southern suburbs of Idlib, resulting in [the death](#) of a 12-year-old child, [Ali Ahmad al Ali](#), who was grazing sheep in the area, and injured another civilian, in addition to killing about [20 sheep and a donkey](#). 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 Thursday, November 11, 2021, at around 10:07 local time, fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles [targeting](#) a [poultry](#) barn [north](#) of [Idlib city](#), an [agricultural](#) area [between Ma'aret Misreen town](#) and Idlib city, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [five civilians, including](#) three [children](#) and one woman, all from one family of IDPs from the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate who were living in a house belonging to the poultry facility. Idlib city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

b. Targeting medical personnel and their related facilities

In 2021, we were unable to document any deaths among medical personnel or attacks on medical facilities, in attacks that we believe were Russian. In contrast, we documented the deaths of four medical personnel and at least 13 attacks on medical facilities in 2020.

c. Targeting educational facilities

In 2021, we were unable to document any attacks on educational facilities in attacks that we believe were Russian, while we documented at least 12 attacks on educational facilities in 2020.

d. Targeting places of worship

In 2021, we documented at least one attack on a place of worship in an attack that we believe was Russian, while we documented at least 23 attacks on places of worship in 2020.

On Thursday, August 19, 2021, at around 05:35 local time, artillery forces, which we believe were Russian, in conjunction with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft overflying the area, fired a shell equipped with the Krasnopol laser guidance system, hitting an area near al Rahman Mosque in al Gharbi neighborhood of Balshoun village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The shell hit a house located 30 meters from the mosque, without causing any damage to the mosque. Balshoun village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

e. Targeting media workers

We documented the death of one media worker in attacks that we believe were Russian in 2021, while two media workers were killed by Russian forces in 2020.

[Hammam al Asi](#), a [Civil Defense media worker](#) with the Bazabour center, was killed on Saturday, July 17, 2021, as a result of shrapnel in the chest, when artillery forces, which we believe were Russian, fired a shell equipped with a Krasnopol laser guidance system near him while he was providing media coverage

of earlier shelling by the same forces on the southeast of Sarja village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

[Hammam](#), a 30-year-old man from Bazabour village in the southern suburbs of Idlib, a first-year university student in the Faculty of Science/ Department of Physics at Tishreen University, was married with three children.

The [Civil Defense Organization](#) published an obituary mourning Hammam on its [official account on Facebook](#).

The Syrian Network for Human Rights spoke with Hassan al Asi¹⁰, director of the Civil Defense Center in Bazabour village, who told us: **“On Saturday, July 17th, the southeastern outskirts of Sarja village in the southern suburbs of Idlib were subjected to artillery shelling by forces we believe were Russian, stationed in Khan al Sebel village, which is under the control of Syrian regime forc-**



Hammam Muhammad al Asi, following his injury as a result of a Russian ground attack targeting south of Sarja village in Idlib suburbs - July 17, 2021

¹⁰ Via WhatsApp on July 25, 2021

es, resulting in the deaths of a number of civilians. During Hammam's media coverage of the location of the shelling, the same forces repeated their artillery shelling with an artillery shell equipped with a Krasnopol laser guidance system, with reconnaissance aircraft, which we believe were Russian, flying overhead. The shell landed near Hammam, injuring him with shrapnel in the chest. He was immediately taken to al Shami Hospital in Ariha city, and then to the al Muhafatha Hospital in Idlib city for surgery, but he died during the surgery. It is worth mentioning that the double-tap attack caused a massacre of five civilians, including three children and one woman, and injured five others. Including two Civil Defense personnel."

F. Use of prohibited weapons

-Cluster Munitions:

In 2021, the SNHR documented one cluster munition attack carried out by Russian forces in Aleppo governorate. This attack resulted in the death of one civilian, and inflicted moderate injuries on at least 10 others.

On Friday, March 5, 2021, at around 20:00 local time, a number of long-range [9M55K missiles](#), which were believed to have been fired from the Russian Hmeimim airbase, at least one of which was loaded with 9n235 cluster submunitions, targeted the fuel refining burners in Tarhin village near al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate; the missiles fell on two sites within the area, causing massive fires in the area and to the fuel tanks there; during the firefighting operation by Syrian Civil Defense personnel, one of the fuel tanks exploded, [resulting in the death](#) of Ahmad al Waki, a [Civil Defense](#) member, with the blaze also burning heavy 'excavator' type machinery, and gutting a fire engine, both belonging to the Civil Defense. The area was under the control of the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

C. ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State')

a. Extrajudicial killing

After the ISIS terrorist group lost control over large areas at the end of March 2019, the pace of violations that we were able to document in 2021 at the group's hands decreased, with the most prominent of these violations being extrajudicial killing.

In addition to these were killings believed to have been carried out by gunmen affiliated with ISIS; the pace of these operations escalated in the second half of 2021, as we recorded numerous killings of civilians in many areas in the villages and towns of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa suburbs, in addition to similar operations in al Hawl Camp, east of Hasaka.

In 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of seven civilians, including two children, killed by ISIS, while the death toll of civilian victims killed by ISIS in 2020 reached 21 civilians, including two children.

D. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition)

a. Extrajudicial killing

In 2021, we documented that Hay'at Tahrir al Sham killed 17 civilians, including five children, while the death toll of civilian victims killed by HTS in 2020 reached 26 civilians, including one woman (adult female).

On Tuesday, May 11, 2021, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham opened fire randomly in al Dana city in the northern suburbs of Idlib, while they were chasing two children who they accused of stealing a motorcycle; the bullets killed a civilian, Ahmad Jamil Mughrabi, from Einjara village in the western suburbs of Aleppo. Al Dana city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

b. Arbitrary arrest and enforced detention:

2021 saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham carrying out detentions of civilians, with arrests concentrated in Idlib city, including activists and workers with civil society groups; most of these arrests occurred due to the detainees expressing opinions critical of the HTS's management of areas under its control, or on other charges such as colluding with Syrian Democratic Forces/ US-led coalition/ the Syrian regime. These detentions were carried out arbitrarily in the form of raids in which HTS members stormed their victims' homes, often breaking down the doors, or by kidnapping their victims while they were traveling or passing through temporary checkpoints, or through issuing summons for interrogation by the Ministry of Justice of the HTS' Salvation Government; we recorded cases of detentions at HTS checkpoints on charges of breaking the fast during the month of Ramadan.

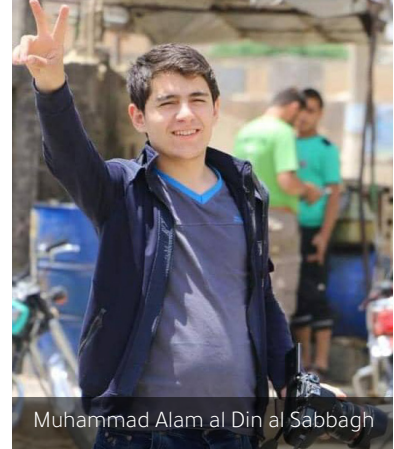
We also recorded summonses being issued by the Media Directorate of the Salvation Government against media activists, after they published posts on their personal Facebook pages on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day.

We also documented arrests carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel in IDP camps in the north of Idlib governorate; the arrests were accompanied by heavy shooting and an assault on civilians, including women.

In 2021, we documented Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's detention of at least 121 individuals, including one child. Of these individuals, 52 were released after the end of their sentences or after paying money for their release. Meanwhile, 69 individuals, including one woman, are still either arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared in the HTS detention centers. In 2020, we documented the detention of at least 146 individuals, including one child and four women, by HTS.

- **Examples of the most notable incidents and cases of arbitrary detention:**

Muhammad Alam al Din al Sabbagh, a university student at the Faculty of Commerce and Economics and a media activist with the Euphrates Humanitarian Association, from Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested/ detained by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel on Wednesday, April 7, 2021, near Termanin village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate over allegations of his dealing with Syrian Democratic Forces, and was taken to an undisclosed location.



Muhammad Alam al Din al Sabbagh

Ahmad Rahhal, from Mer'yan village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate who lives in Salqin city in the western suburbs of the governorate, was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel on Tuesday, June 8, 2021, in connection with criticizing a money collection receipt issued by HTS' Salvation Government in a post on his Facebook account, and taken to an undisclosed location.



Ahmad Rahhal

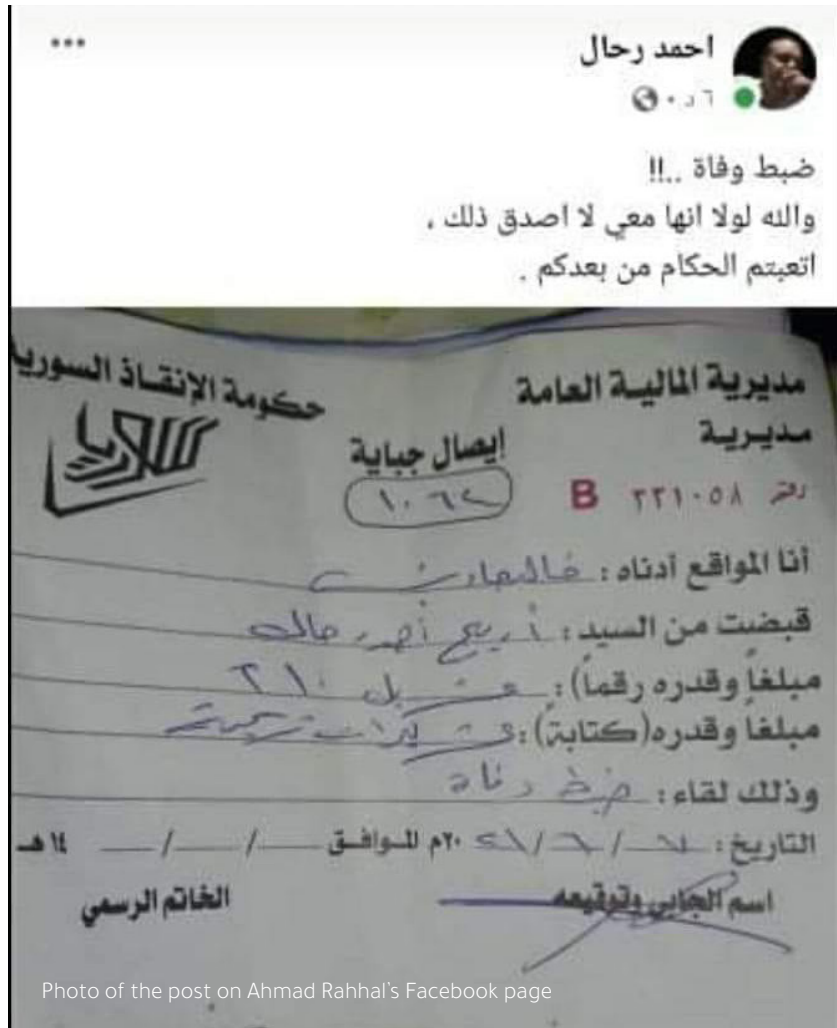
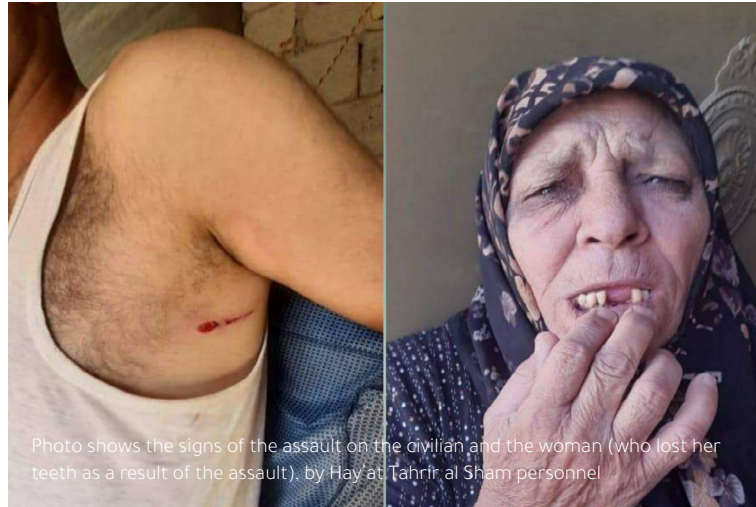
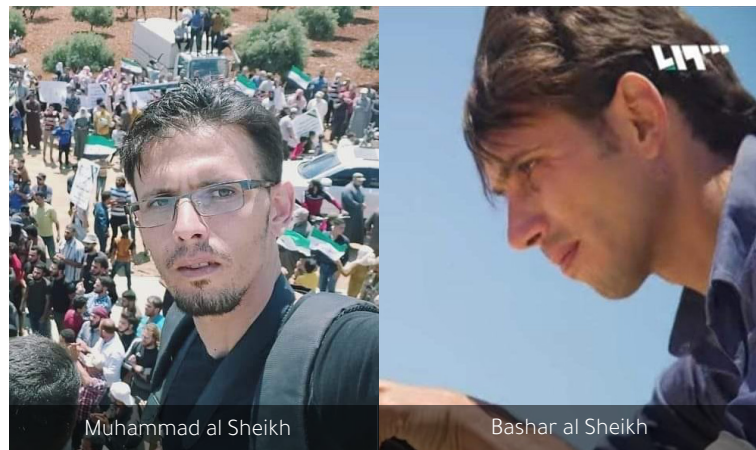


Photo of the post on Ahmad Rahhal's Facebook page

On Tuesday, August 17, 2021, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham carried out a campaign of raids and arrests/ detentions on the Khair al Sham IDP Camp in north of Kelli town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of three civilians who were taken to an undisclosed location, with the arrests accompanied by heavy shooting and an assault on a civilian man and woman, with the woman attacked for attempting to prevent the HTS personnel from arresting her son.



Bashar and Muhammad al Sheikh, two brothers, both media workers from Kafr Nbouda town in the north-west of Hama governorate, currently living in al Anadolu IDP Camp near Kafr Lousin village in north of Idlib governorate, were arrested/ detained on Saturday, September 4, 2021, by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel in a raid on their residence in the camp on charges of dealing with the US-led coalition forces. We documented that Muhammad al Sheikh was released on September 6, 2021, while the fate of his brother, Bashar, remains unknown.



c. Torture in detention centers:

The methods of torture practiced by HTS in its detention centers vary, with a number of its torture practices being very similar to those inflicted by the Syrian regime in its detention centers. We also note that there are other similarities between HTS' and the regime's practices, including the strategy of using torture to force detainees to confess, then trying them on the basis of these confessions extracted under torture.

In 2021, the SNHR team documented the deaths of at least four individuals, including one child, as a result of torture and medical negligence at the hands of HTS, while we documented the death of one individual due to torture and medical negligence at the hands of HTS in 2020.

Ahmad Hussein Sattouf, from Tal Hadya village, south of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel in the village in February 2021, on charges of affiliation with Syrian regime forces. On Wednesday, September 15, 2021, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel informed his family of his death without handing over his body. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture in an HTS detention center.



Ahmad Hussein Sattouf

E. All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army

a. Extrajudicial killing

Most of the unlawful killings by the Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army forces occurred during clashes between these factions themselves which resulted in the deaths of civilians caught in the crossfire. In 2021, we documented the deaths of 24 civilians, including three children and two women (adult female) at the hands of all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army, while we documented the deaths of 27 civilians, including nine children and four women (adult female), in 2020.

– Examples of the most notable extrajudicial killings:

On Tuesday, April 13, 2021, a 44- year-old man, named as [Muhammad Ihsan Khader Qoujah Oghalan](#), from Homs governorate, was killed in crossfire during clashes between members of al Sham Brigade affiliated with the Syrian National Army that took place near his home in Sharran town, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which was under the control of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, December 21, 2021, Syrian National Army artillery forces fired a number of shells at al As-sadiya village in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, resulting in the death of a 60-year-old man, named as Saleh Hamid al Hussein. The village was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident

b. Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention:

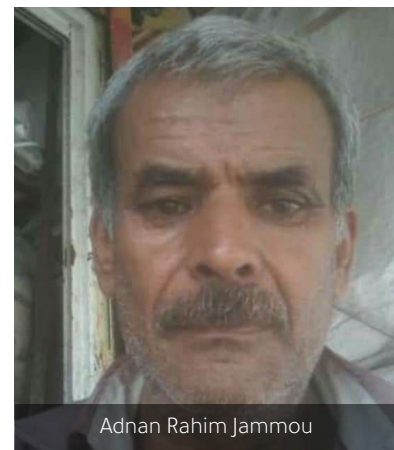
All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army also carried out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in 2021, including women, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting those coming from areas under the control of the Syrian regime. In addition, we recorded detentions carried out under the pretext of the detainee's ethnicity, on charges of contacting Syrian Democratic Forces, or of working previously with SDF institutions, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army's control in Aleppo governorate. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions through the judiciary, as well as being carried out without presenting any clear charges against those being detained. We also documented raids and detentions carried out by Syrian National Army personnel, targeting civilians on charges of collaborating with Syrian Democratic Forces. These arrests were concentrated in some villages of Afrin city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

We also recorded detentions targeting women under the pretext that they were trying to cross the Turkish border illegally, before releasing them later.

In 2021, the SNHR's team documented the detention of at least 420 individuals, including six children and 47 women, by all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army forces, with 67 of these individuals subsequently released and at least 353 others, including three children and 38 women, still detained or forcibly disappeared in the detention centers of all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army. In 2020, we documented the detention of at least 347 individuals, including six children and 11 women.

- Examples of the most notable incidents and cases of arbitrary detention:

Adnan Rahim Jammou, his wife Fatima Mahmoud Hounik, his son Rezkar, and female child Alia, from Kafr Shileh village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, were detained by personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army forces on Friday, January 1, 2021, in a raid on their home in al Mahmoudiya neighborhood of Afrin city, and taken to an undisclosed location.



Adnan Rahim Jammou

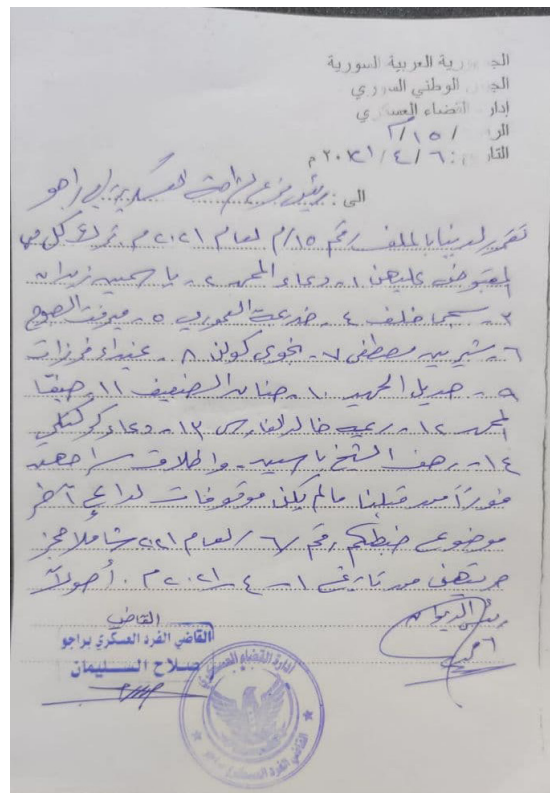
Saleh Izzo al Mustafa, from al Rehaniya village in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was detained by personnel affiliated with Syrian National Army on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 in connection with the explosion of two IEDs of unknown origin in Ras al Ein city center in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, over his appearance in video footage recorded by surveillance cameras at the time of the explosion, and was taken to one of the Syrian National Army's detention centers in Ras al Ein city. We documented that he was released on February 11, 2021, with his body bearing signs of torture.



Photos of the civilian Saleh Izzo al Mustafa show the signs of torture on his body



On Friday, April 2, 2021, Syrian National Army personnel arrested/ detained 19 civilians, including 15 women, in Rajo town, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, over their attempt to illegally cross the Turkish border, and took them to one of the Syrian National Army's detention centers in the town. We recorded their release on Tuesday, April 6, 2021.



A document issued by the Military Justice Department on April 6, 2021, ordering the release of the civilians who were arrested for attempting to illegally cross the Turkish border

Ali al Sultan al Faraj, from Balwa village, which is administratively a part of Slouk district in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was abducted from a café in Balwa village on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, by gunmen affiliated with the Syrian National Army's 20th Division, known as Soqoor al Sonna, and taken to a house in Ali Bajeliya village in the suburbs of Raqqa gov-

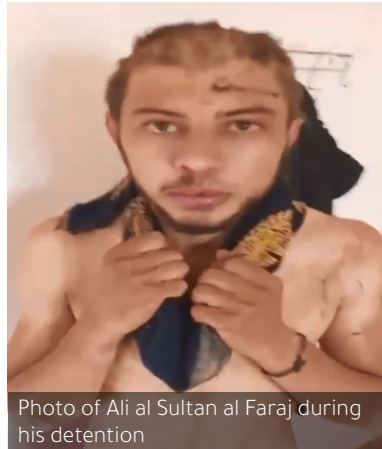


Photo of Ali al Sultan al Faraj during his detention

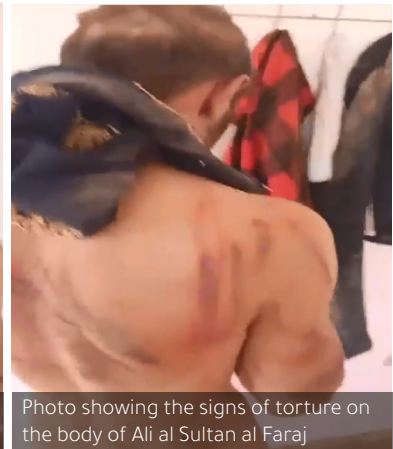


Photo showing the signs of torture on the body of Ali al Sultan al Faraj

ernorate, where the SNA personnel brutally tortured him by lashing him with a whip and beating him with a club all over his body, while he was completely stripped naked, with the attackers adding further insult to injury by forcing their victim to apologize to those torturing him while filming these debased acts. Following this brutal attack and the grotesque forced 'apology', along with the attackers' relentless verbal insults to the victim throughout the attack, they subsequently released Mr. Al Faraj several hours later, dumping him near Hamam al Turkman village in the suburbs of Raqqa governorate, publishing those disturbing videos on the Internet on September 9, 2021.

c. Torture in detention centers:

2021 saw an increase in the levels of torture in opposition factions' detention centers, targeting civilians in connection with freedom of opinion and expression and on multiple charges. In 2021, we issued [state-ments condemning](#) several [incidents](#) of torture of civilians at the hands of gunmen affiliated with the Syrian National Army forces in the areas under their control, mainly in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

In 2021, the SNHR's team documented the deaths of at least five individuals, including one women, who were killed as a result of torture and medical negligence in detention centers run by all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army forces, compared to three individuals documented as killed under torture in 2020.

[Ms. Muwailidah Nu'man](#), aged 62, from Bouzikia village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by members of the SNA's al Hamzeh Brigade in April 2019 in a raid on her home in the village over accusations that she had engaged in dealings with the Syrian Democratic Forces. Almost since that date, she has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the SNA forces preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting her or knowing her whereabouts. On Wednesday, May 30, 2021, al Hamzah Brigade informed her family of her death in al Ra'ee Prison in al

Ra'ee village in northeast Aleppo governorate, handing over her body to her family. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that she was in extremely poor health at the time of her arrest as she suffered from chronic diseases, namely high blood pressure and diabetes, for which she needed regular medication, indicating that she probably died due to torture and lack of health care in al Ra'ee Prison.

F. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party)

In July of 2012, forces affiliated with the Kurdish Democratic Union party emerged and began to spread and take control of territory across areas of Syria. Subsequently, the party and its forces joined the Kurdish Self-Management forces, which were established in January 2014. At the request of the US-led coalition against ISIS, and in particular the US Administration, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party conducted a cosmetic change process on October 10, 2015, by incorporating some personnel from Arab and Assyrian backgrounds, in order to announce the launch of what was called the Syrian Democratic Forces, which were able, with the help of the US-led coalition, to take control of the northeastern region of Syria.

Despite the changes these forces have witnessed, there has been no change in their policy in the management of the areas under their control, as they continued to commit grave violations against civilians, ranging from killings to arrests, torture, sieges and forced conscription. They also imposed restrictions on the residents of areas under their control and deprived them of freedom of expression and freedom of movement through the establishment of military posts within their areas of control or on the borders separating these from areas under the control of other forces.

a. Extrajudicial killing

We documented that Syrian Democratic Forces killed 75 civilians in 2021, including 11 children and two women (adult female), while the civilian death toll of victims who were killed by the SDF in 2020 reached 63 civilians, including 11 children and three women (adult female), in addition to committing at least one massacre during this period.

– **Examples of the most notable extrajudicial killings:**

On Sunday, March 14, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces' artillery forces fired a number of mortar shells, targeting al Humran village in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo, resulting in the death of a 12-year-old child, Bakr Shehadeh, and a woman, Ms. Ammoun al Muhammad, and injuring others. The village was under the control of Syrian National Army factions at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, July 15, 2021, [Ryad Ali Mahmoud al Khazzam](#), from al Mrei'ya village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was shot dead on by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in al Takihi village, which is administratively a part of al Bseira district in the eastern suburbs of the governorate. The village was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, November 26, 2021, [Muhammad Ahmad al Hanshouli](#), a 23-year-old man from Ajaja village in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, died due to wounds inflicted on November 22 in shooting by Syrian Democratic Forces in the village while they were pursuing him in an attempt to arrest him. The area was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

b. Arbitrary arrest/ enforced disappearance

Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance throughout 2021, targeting activists and members of civil society groups who oppose their policies. We also recorded SDF carrying out mass raids and arrests of civilians, media activists and members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party who took part in anti-SDF demonstrations in areas under its control, as well as targeting civilians for their kinship relationships with individuals in the Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army. The SDF also targeted several families for arrest, as well as targeting several members of the same families, including elderly people, without providing clear charges, taking these detained individuals to undisclosed locations.

The SDF also carried out campaigns of mass raids and detentions, targeting civilians, including children, on the supposed pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters, and other campaigns targeting medical personnel, which were accompanied by attacks on medical facilities.

We also recorded Syrian Democratic Forces again [arresting](#) children [with the aim](#) of taking them to [its training](#) and [recruitment](#) camps and forcibly conscripting them, preventing their families from communicating with them, and failing to disclose their fate.

We documented detentions of teachers and students over their participation in protests held to condemn the earlier arrest of other teachers by the SDF. These detentions were accompanied by beating and verbal insults against students. We also note that all the students detained are children aged between 15 to 17 years old, with their juvenile status not taken into consideration by those detaining them.

We also documented arrests targeting students, teachers and members of the Christian Syriac Orthodox Creed Council, over their criticism of and refusal to adopt the educational curriculum imposed by the SDF in its areas of control; we issued a [detailed report](#) on this issue on February 19, 2021.

In the context of cases in which individuals have been released, we documented in 2021 that Syrian Democratic Forces released 269 civilians, including two women, from SDF detention centers. The duration of detention for those released ranged from eight months to two years, with most being released as a result of tribal mediation.

In 2021, the SNHR's team documented the arrest of at least 645 individuals by Syrian Democratic Forces, including 59 children and seven women, of whom 201 were released; most of these releases were organized under tribal agreements, while at least 444 individuals, including 48 children, are still detained or forcibly disappeared in the SDF's detention centers. Meanwhile, we documented the arrest of at least 481 individuals by Syrian Democratic Forces in 2020, including 32 children and one woman.

We note that some of the arrests were of an ethnically discriminatory nature.

– **Examples of the most notable incidents and cases of arbitrary detention:**

On Wednesday, January 20, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces' personnel in al Derbasiya city in the northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate physically and verbally assaulted students from a number of local schools who held a demonstration against the arrest of seven teachers by the SDF on January 19, 2021, beating and insulting the young protesters, as well as detaining a number of them. SNHR has documented the detention of 17 students, including six females, by the SDF forces, [who beat and insulted the students](#) while they were participating in the demonstration. We documented that all of them were released on Saturday, January 23, 2021. We also note that all the students who were detained are children aged between 15 to 17 years old, with their juvenile status not being taken into consideration.



Photo showing Syrian Democratic Forces arresting one of the students while they were participating in a demonstration against the detention of teachers in al Derbasiya city



Photo shows Garboul al Shehadah, an administrator at the hospital, who was beaten by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel

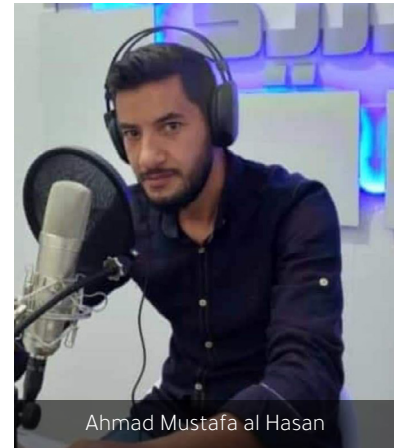


Photo shows Dr. Raed, a specialist in internal diseases, who was beaten by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel

On Friday, March 5, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces personnel carried out a raid on the Public Surgical Hospital in a Sh-heil city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, [sabotaged](#) medical equipment and furniture there and arrested/detained eight civilians present in the hospital, including a doctor and three nurses. The arrests/detentions were accompanied by verbal and physical

assaults against the hospital staff by the SDF personnel, in addition to the [burning of cars and motorcycles](#) belonging to hospital personnel.

Ahmad Mustafa al Hasan, a media activist and reporter for SY+, from Kabsh Gharbi village in the northwestern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces on Wednesday, June 16, 2021, as he was passing through one of SDF's checkpoints in Raqqa city, over his criticism of the poor service conditions in the city with is controlled by SDF, published on his Facebook account. Following his arrest, Ahmad was taken to an undisclosed location.



Ahmad Mustafa al Hasan

Isam Muhammad Eisa, a child born in 2008, from Qatama village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was kidnapped for forced conscription by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on Tuesday, November 23, 2021, near the Martyr Qahraman School in al Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in Aleppo city, and taken to an SDF conscription camp.



Child Isam Muhammad Eisa

– Photos of detainees released by Syrian Democratic Forces show the effects of the gross neglect of medical and health care during their detention:

Hussein Thabbah al Dakhil, from al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in November 2019, with his detention lasting for around two years, before being released on Sunday, May 23, 2021, from one of the SDF's detention centers in Hasaka governorate. The comparison between the



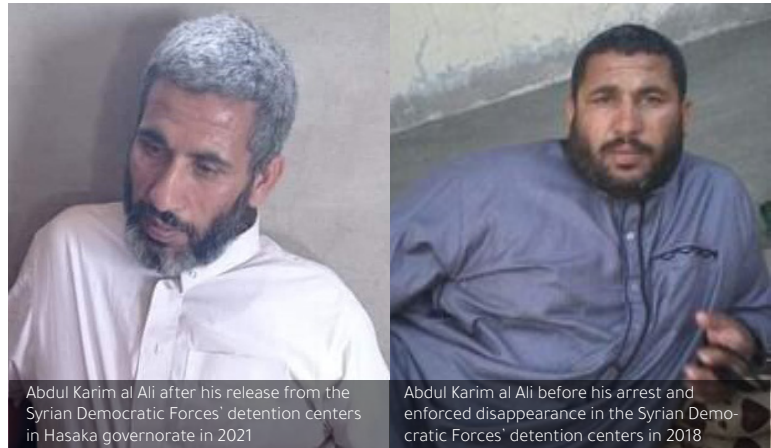
Hussein Thabbah al Dakhil after his release from the Syrian Democratic Forces' detention centers in Hasaka governorate in 2021



Hussein Thabbah al Dakhil before his arrest and enforced disappearance in the Syrian Democratic Forces' detention centers in 2019

photos of Hussein before and after his release clearly shows the signs of the healthcare neglect he suffered during his detention.

Abdul Karim al Ali, known as Abu Atwan, from al Shnan village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, who was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in 2018 and taken to an undisclosed location with his detention lasting for around three years. On September 21, 2021, the SDF released him from one of the group's detention centers in Hasaka governorate. The photos show his health and physical condition before his arrest and after his release.



c. Torture in detention centers

Syrian Democratic Forces have used torture in the group's detention centers against detainees and abductees as a way to extract confessions, with torture often carried out in a vengeful way and based on ethnic prejudice. The methods of torture used by SDF vary and are often similar to those practiced by the Syrian regime, with the most common methods, according to the accounts of the survivors of detention centers, being severe and harmful beatings, fracturing bones, falqa (foot-whipping), shabeh, flogging, pulling out fingernails, and electrocution, in addition to solitary confinement and shaving part of the detainees' heads as a punishment to further humiliate and insult detainees. Other torture methods used by the SDF include deprivation of food and medicine, overcrowding, and poor hygiene. In 2021, we recorded a noticeable increase in the death toll of torture victims by Syrian Democratic Forces, and documented a number of cases in which the bodies of victims handed over by the SDF to their families bore clear signs of torture.

In 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of at least 15 individuals due to torture and medical negligence in SDF detention centers, compared to 14 individuals who died due to torture in 2020.

[Khaled Khalaf Saleh al Ramadan](#), from Mouhasan city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in October 2018. Almost since that time, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the SDF denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Sunday, April 4, 2021, his family was informed by a former detainee released earlier from an SDF detention center in Hasaka governorate that Khaled had died there due to torture and the deterioration of his health.

Ghiath Abboud Saud al Faadel, from Tal al Shayer village, which is administratively a part of al Shaddadi city in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, born in 2000, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in May 2019. Almost since that time, he has been forcibly disappeared, with the SDF preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or knowing his fate. On Wednesday, May 12, 2021, his family was informed by SDF personnel that Ghiath had died in the SDF's Hasaka Central Prison in Hasaka city, with his body returned to them. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he most probably died due to torture in Hasaka Central Prison.



Ghiath Abboud Saud al Faadel

[Eisa Muhammad al Khalil](#), from Nus Tal village, which is administratively a part of Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in 2018. Almost since that time, he has been forcibly disappeared, with the SDF preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or knowing his fate. On Thursday, May 13, 2021, his family was informed by SDF personnel that Eisa had died in an SDF detention center without handing over his body to them. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he most probably died due to torture and neglect of healthcare in an SDF detention center.

d. Specifically protected individuals and objects

1. Medical sector:

In 2021, we documented at least two incidents of attack on hospitals and medical points at the hands of Syrian Democratic Forces, while we documented in 2020 at least one SDF attack on a hospital.

On Wednesday, February 17, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces used a missile launcher to shell Villas Street in the center of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. One of the missiles landed near the back entrance to the city's [al Shefaa Hospital](#), injuring a number of civilians, and causing minor material damage to the hospital's [structure and furniture](#). Afrin city was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

2. Educational sector:

In 2021, we documented at least one attack on an educational facility, and in 2020, we also documented at least one attack.

On Monday, August 30, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces' [artillery](#) forces fired a number of artillery shells at Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. One of the shells fell near al Ittihad al Araby School in the city, causing the partial destruction of the school perimeter wall. Afrin city was under the control of the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

G. US-led coalition forces

a. Extrajudicial killing

2021 marked the seventh annual anniversary of the US-led coalition military intervention in Syria, which began on September 23, 2014. Following the announcement of the elimination of ISIS in March 2019 in al Baghouz town, the last stronghold of ISIS, the frequency of the US-led coalition airstrikes decreased. Thereafter, the type of military operations in the area changed largely to joint raid patrols between the US-led coalition and the SDF to target the remaining ISIS cells.

We documented the deaths of two civilians at the hands of US-led coalition forces in 2021, while in 2020, SNHR documented that US-led coalition forces killed seven civilians, including one child and one woman (adult female), as well as one massacre.

H. Other parties

SNHR's documentation of the victims killed in Syria in 2021 includes a range of classifications, such as victims who were killed in bombings whose perpetrators SNHR has been unable to identify, victims who died in gunfire whose source SNHR has been unable to identify, victims killed by landmines and shelling whose source SNHR has been unable to identify, victims killed by parties SNHR has been unable to identify, victims who drowned, and victims who were killed by Jordanian, Lebanese or Turkish border forces.

Under this category, SNHR documented in 2021 the deaths of 820 civilians, including 178 children, 91 women (adult female), six medical personnel, and two victims who died due to torture, in addition to at least 10 massacres; in the same category in 2020, we documented the deaths of 947 civilians, including 162 children, 83 women (adult female), five medical personnel, one media worker, and nine victims who died due to torture, in addition to at least 18 massacres.

Also, bombings and attacks carried out by the forces included in this category were responsible for nearly 34 attacks on vital civilian facilities in 2021, including two on medical facilities, and three on educational facilities, while in 2020, SNHR documented nearly at least 70 attacks on vital civilian facilities, including two on medical facilities, 11 on educational facilities, and 16 on places of worship.

– **Examples of the most notable killings:**

On Thursday, January 21, 2021, [Mahmoud al Ibrahim](#) (al Bannat), a member of the [central negotiating committee](#) in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate, was shot dead by gunmen whom SNHR was unable to identify, in al Mzayreeb town in the suburbs of Daraa. The area was under the control of the Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, February 25, 2021, [a car bomb](#) whose source SNHR was unable to identify [exploded](#) in the [poultry market](#) in Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of five civilians, including two male children and one woman, while 10 other civilians were injured. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. Ras al Ein city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, April 11, 2021, two children, Athad Ibrahim Hussein and Delyar Hammou Hussein, aged 12 and 11 respectively, were killed, while other children were injured, when a landmine, whose source SNHR was unable to identify, exploded near the area where they were playing in Joudi Mazen village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The village is controlled by Syrian National Army forces.

On Friday, July 16, 2021, the explosion of a landmine planted by a party whom SNHR was unable to identify in farmland in Tal Malah village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, resulted in the death of a civilian, Hussein al Askar, while he was herding sheep in the area. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, October 11, 2021, [a car bomb](#) whose source SNHR was unable to identify [exploded](#) in a street in the area between Dawwar Kawa and Dawwar al Qabban at the entrance of al Hal Market in the center of Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the [deaths](#) of seven [individuals](#), including five [civilians](#) and two fighters, and the injury of nearly 24 other civilians. We note that the area where the explosion took place contains four military headquarters belonging to the Syrian National Army. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. Afrin city was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, November 5, 2021, a landmine planted by a party whom SNHR was unable to identify on a dirt road in al Dawa area in the west of Tadmur city in the suburbs of Homs governorate, exploded as a car carrying civilians was passing, killing [seven civilians](#), including a child and two women. Al Dawa area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident

– **Examples of the most notable incidents of attack on vital civilian facilities:**

On Saturday, February 20, 2021, an IED whose source SNHR was unable to identify exploded in the center of a popular market in al Bseira city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in casualties, as well as causing minor [material damage](#) to a number of shops and the market facilities. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. The city was under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident

On Saturday, June 12, 2021, al Shefaa Hospital, located in Villas Street in the center of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, and the surrounding area, were subject to a ground attack in which the attackers used several shells whose source has not yet been identified by SNHR as of this writing; the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack are either Syrian regime forces or Syrian Democratic Forces, with the attack emanating from an area controlled by them.



[The attack](#) resulted in a [massacre](#), in [addition](#) to [inflicting](#) severe [destruction](#) on the [hospital building](#), and significant [material damage](#) to [its equipment](#) and to [a Civil Defense ambulance](#), putting the hospital out of service.

SNHR further notes that an attack was launched on Afrin city one hour before the hospital and the surrounding areas in the city came under attack, with this earlier bombardment resulting in deaths and injuries, who had been taken to al Shefaa hospital for treatment before the attack on the hospital took place.

We note that al Shefaa hospital, which is operated by [the Syrian American Medical Society \(SAMS\)](#), is considered to be one of the biggest hospitals in north Syria, providing health services for about 15,000 people per month. Up to the present moment, we are unable to identify the party responsible for this attack. Afrin city was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, August 3, 2021, gunmen whom SNHR was unable to identify stormed the Abu Hamam Primary School for boys in Abu Hamam town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, damaging and sabotaging some of the school's furniture and removing its main door, as well as writing graffiti in support of the Syrian regime, with SNHR still trying to contact witnesses to obtain more details of the incident. The town was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, November 3, 2021, a landmine whose source SNHR was unable to identify exploded near a crane belonging to the Syrian Civil Defense's Rajo Center, in Koulyan Tahtani village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, while the SCD team was responding to a car accident in the village. The explosion caused [the injury](#) of two SCD personnel and inflicted [moderate material damage](#) on the vehicle. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses to obtain more details of the incident. The village was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

V. Landmark Key Events in 2021:

The Syrian regime unilaterally held 'presidential elections' in May, based on the constitution that it established unilaterally in 2012, flatly contradicting the course of the political process stipulated in Security Council Resolution No. 2254¹¹.

The Syrian regime's elections were widely rejected by the Syrian people in all areas outside the regime's control, and even in the area of southern Syria under regime control, meaning that approximately 40% of the Syrian territories rejected the unilateral elections, with the vast majority of democratic countries worldwide deeming them illegitimate and noting that they did not reflect the will of the Syrian people, with the most notable of these nations being the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy¹², and Canada¹³. The United Nations also confirmed that it did not participate in these elections¹⁴.

Throughout the electoral campaigns, which continued after the Constitutional Court announced the names of the candidates up until the 'election' itself, we at the Syrian Network for Human Rights monitored campaigns carried out by the al Ba'ath Party to mobilize citizens, employees and students in public gathering places and universities to promote the elections. We also documented that regime security forces carried out operations in universities, schools, and [state institutions](#) depriving tens of thousands staff and students of their liberty in order to force them to vote. [Every university student](#) who refused to comply with the regime's orders [was threatened](#) with administrative penalties, including the possibility of being summoned for interrogation within the security branches, forcing the vast majority of students to vote for Bashar al Assad. Many of them told us that after they finished voting, they were taken, along with state employees, in groups supervised by the university security guards or other students with influence within the state security authorities, who are themselves an extension of the security services, to participate in rallies in support of Bashar al Assad. In addition, we documented many incidents of arrest/detention that targeted civilians over their non-participation in the sham election or their failure to vote for Bashar al Assad.

¹¹ United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2254, [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2254\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2254(2015)).

¹² United States Department of State, Joint Statement by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, and the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, and Italy, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-by-the-secretary-of-state-of-the-united-states-of-america-the-foreign-secretary-of-the-united-kingdom-and-the-foreign-ministers-of-france-germany-and-italy-2/>

¹³ Government of Canada, Global Affairs Canada, Statement on Syria's upcoming presidential elections, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2021/05/state-ment-on-syrias-upcoming-presidential-elections.html>

¹⁴ United Nations, Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/db210526.doc.htm>



A rally in support of Syrian regime president Bashar al Assad in Homs city, on May 26, during the 'presidential elections'

In an attempt to legitimize the elections, the Syrian regime's People's Assembly invited representatives from some parliaments of 'brotherly and friendly' countries to act as 'observers' at the election of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and monitor the event, namely Algeria, the Sultanate of Oman, Mauritania, Russia, Iran, China, Venezuela, Cuba, Belarus, South Africa, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Armenia and Bolivia. These countries are all dictatorial states that have always supported the Syrian regime and voted against the resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria¹⁵

The electoral process witnessed a number of abuses and violations of the General Elections Law¹⁶ in the Syrian Arab Republic, with these abuses proceeding without any accountability or objection by any of the other candidates to the outcome of the 'presidential elections'.

The [results of the 'presidential elections'](#) conducted unilaterally by the Syrian regime were as expected. On May 27, the Speaker of the People's Assembly, Hammouda Sabbagh, announced the victory of Bashar al Assad as President of the Syrian Arab Republic, by virtue of his obtaining an absolute majority of the voters' votes by 95.1 percent of the number of valid votes. According to Sabagh, the total number of voters who cast their votes in Syria and overseas, reached 14,239,140, or 78.64 percent of those entitled to vote. The results of the vote were farcical, indicating a vastly inflated population of nearly 40 million people in Syria.

¹⁵ SNHR, Eleven Countries Voted against Human Rights Council Resolutions Condemning Violations against the Syrian People Since March 2011, <https://sn4hr.org/?p=55572>

¹⁶ The People's Assembly of the Syrian Arab Republic, General Elections Law, <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=5516&cat=327>

On March 23, 2021, the Russian regime [called for](#) the opening of three humanitarian crossings between the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces and the Idlib region, namely the Saraqeb and Miznaz crossings in Idlib governorate and Abu Zaidin corridor in the Aleppo governorate, starting from March 25, under the pretext of improving the humanitarian situation in the region. This call was issued on the sidelines of the Brussels V Conference and came after Russian forces bombed relief vehicles and a relief warehouse at the Bab al Hawa crossing area.

Among the most prominent events on the humanitarian level in 2021, which had the greatest impact on the Syrian people, was the renewal of Security Council Resolution 2533 (July 2020)¹⁷ to allow the United Nations to deliver cross-border humanitarian aid, with the Security Council voting unanimously on July 9 in support of Resolution [2585](#) to extend the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism to Syria through the Bab al Hawa border crossing with Turkey for a period of 6 months, subject to automatic extension for another six months, after an assessment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the delivery of aid through the lines of contact through the areas of control of Syrian regime forces approved by the resolution.

It is clear that Russia has sought to politicize the issue of aid in both its own and the Syrian regime's favor; after the adoption of Resolution 2533, Russian officials began broadcasting statements threatening that they would work to stop this mechanism and limit aid provided to IDPs through the Syrian regime. On July 8, 2021, we issued a report entitled "[UN Aid to Northern Syria, Which Is Neutral, Absolutely Essential, and Delivered with the Approval of the Controlling Forces, Does Not Need Permission from the Security Council](#)", in which we noted that the Syrian regime, which is accused of stealing and looting humanitarian aid, obstructing its access, and besieging and starving entire areas, cannot be trusted.

On August 30, 2021, three trucks carrying relief materials for the World Food Program (WFP) travelled from the areas controlled by the Syrian regime to areas controlled by the opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham via the Mizanaz and Ma'aret al Na'san crossing in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib, followed by 12 more trucks the next day. This convoy was the first step in implementing the resolution to deliver cross-line humanitarian aid, which was approved in [Security Council Resolution 2585](#). On December 9, 2021, another convoy of aid entered northwest Syria through the Saraqeb crossing, east of Idlib city. A [tweet](#) by the World Food Program account on Twitter on the same day indicated that this convoy is complementary to cross-border aid.

¹⁷ A resolution allowing the United Nations to deliver cross-border aid without the Syrian regime's permission through the Bab al Hawa border crossing in northern Syria. [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2533\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2533(2020))

On December 14, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in [his report](#) to the Security Council that Cross-border humanitarian assistance delivered to the Syrians without the consent of the Syrian regime, is still necessary. He said: “Cross-border assistance remains lifesaving for millions of people in need in north-west Syria,” adding that, “At this point, such cross-line convoys, even if deployed regularly, could not replicate the size and scope of the cross-border operation.”



The entry of the second batch of humanitarian aid convoys across the lines of contact, on December 9, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2585

2021 saw many statements by Russian officials about the weapons that were used in Syria and about the extent of combat experience that the Russian military forces attained through their experience in Syria. These statements were part of a propaganda campaign carried out by Russia to promote its weapons in the global arms market; on May 25, TASS news agency reported statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the opening of a defense conference in the city of [Sochi](#) in which he revealed that more than 85% of the commanders of formations and regiments had obtained combat experience in Syria, further confirming our previous references to Syria being turned into a military training and testing ground for Russian military forces and weapons.

Russian statements continued in this distasteful vein, with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stating on July 14 during a meeting with employees of the Russian helicopter manufacturer Rostvertol: “We tested more than 320 types of different weapons in Syria,” according to the [Russian TASS news agency](#); this figure showed an increase of 20 more types of weapons over the number he mentioned in his statement in May. [Russian Defense Minister](#) repeated his statement on August 30, when he was again quoted by TASS, saying, “In fact, we have tested all the weapons, except for easy-to-understand versions.”

The year 2021 again saw activity by cells believed to be affiliated with ISIS in eastern Syria, in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate and the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate in particular; this activity targeted opponents of ISIS. The southern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour also saw clashes between Syrian Regime forces and ISIS, after the latter targeted convoys of Syrian regime forces and allies in ambushes.

In 2021, the Initial Response Team¹⁸ continued its work in recovering bodies from mass graves spread in various villages and towns in Raqqa governorate, with the team discovering three mass graves in the western and northern suburbs of Raqqa, bringing the number of mass graves discovered in Raqqa governorate to 31, since the beginning of the work of the Initial Response Team to exhume the bodies at the beginning of January 2018. On March 28, 2019, we issued [a report](#) criticizing the random exhumation operations taking place, demanding that any such operations be supervised by international organizations and that the work be carried out by an independent, transparent and experienced body.



Workers from the Initial Response Team during excavation and exhumation of bodies from the al Roumaniya neighborhood cemetery in Raqqa - February 9, 2021

During 2021, the Israeli air force launched dozens of airstrikes inside Syria, with most of these targeting military targets of Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias; the most notable of these airstrikes was the attack targeting the container yard in the port of Latakia on December 28, with [SANA news agency](#) reporting that the attacks led to huge fires breaking out in the location and causing damage to some buildings adjacent to the targeted area, including al Nada Hospital. [Reuters](#) quoted sources at the targeted port as stating that the attack hit the container area where large shipments of Iranian ammunition that arrived the previous month were being stored.

¹⁸ The Response Team is affiliated with the Reconstruction Committee of the Civil Council of Raqqa affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces, whose mission is to discover mass graves, transfer the bodies and identify them. It started its work in January 2018.



Military operations and the use of prohibited weapons:

2021 saw a significant reduction in the levels of military operations by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in northwestern Syria, with the attacks by Syrian regime forces limited to artillery and missile bombardment on the cities and towns of the southern suburbs of Idlib, the western suburbs of Hama and the eastern suburbs of Aleppo, close to the contact lines; these attacks sometimes extended to deeper within those areas, with the bombardment targeting civilian-populated areas, such as Idlib city and Ariha city in the suburbs of Idlib and al Bab city in the suburbs of Aleppo, resulting in casualties. This decline was interspersed with sporadic military escalation campaigns, some of which lasted for one day, while others extended over months, with ground attacks being used in most of these.

The airstrikes launched by Russian forces in 2021 focused on northwestern Syria, the Badiya of Raqqa, and Deir Ez-Zour in eastern Syria. Most of Russia's airstrikes were on military headquarters of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham. In the second half of the year, we documented a number of attacks on poultry farms in the Idlib region, which resulted in the killing of civilians and the death of thousands of birds, in addition to significant material damage to these facilities.

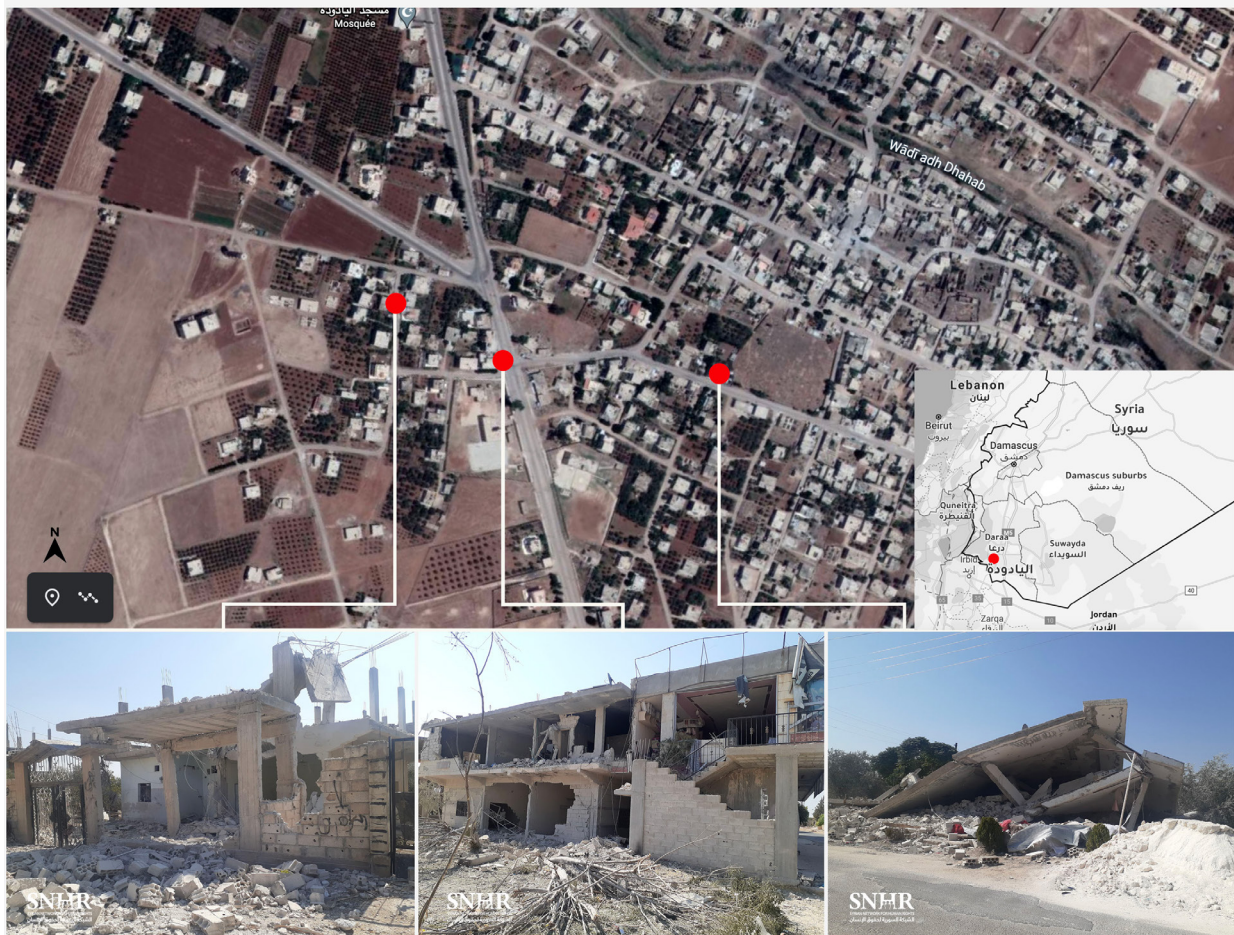
In May, the artillery and missile attacks by Syrian regime forces and the regime's allies on the cities and towns of the southern suburbs of Idlib, the western suburbs of Hama and the eastern suburbs of Aleppo decreased even more, in what appears to have been a preparation by the Syrian regime for the farcical 'presidential elections' that took place at the end of that month; with the end of the supposed elections, the rates of military operations increased again and focused on the Jabal al Zaweya area, west of Idlib city.

In 2021, Daraa governorate saw a military escalation by the Syrian regime forces and their allies, the most violent since 2018¹⁹, with the escalation in the governorate beginning in January, when clashes took place between forces from the Syrian regime's Fourth Division and fighters from Armed Opposition factions. After the end of the 'presidential elections', in June, the people in several areas of the governorate took to the streets for demonstrations to express their rejection of the elections. As a result, the Syrian regime launched a military campaign, as part of which, on July 27, regime forces stormed the al Shayyah area in the southern plains of the Daraa al Balad area, and the Gharz area in the eastern part of the city; the regime then escalated its operations after fighters in the area resisted its efforts to advance, with the regime's forces bombing several areas in the governorate.

¹⁹ The Response Team is affiliated with the Reconstruction Committee of the Civil Council of Raqqa affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces, whose mission is to discover mass graves, transfer the bodies and identify them. It started its work in January 2018.

The Syrian regime's military campaign continued until the beginning of September, targeting the Daraa al Balad area, and the neighborhoods of Tareeq al Sadd and the Camps in Daraa city, in addition to cities and towns in the western suburbs of Daraa, including Tafas city, the towns of al Yadouda, al Mzayreeb, and al Ajami village, during which the neighborhoods of Daraa city saw several attempted advances by Syrian regime forces, which were challenged by local opposition fighters. On September 5, an agreement was reached between the Negotiating Committee for civilians in Daraa city on the one hand, and Russia and the Syrian regime's security committee on the other, putting an end to the regime's military escalation on Daraa city; subsequently, agreements were reached in the remaining areas in the governorate continuing up until October 18. The bombardment by the Syrian regime forces and its militias resulted in the deaths of dozens of civilian victims, including children and women, and the displacement of tens of thousands more people. The Syrian regime forces and its militias also launched campaigns of arbitrary arrests against civilians in the governorate.

Map showing the locations of attacks launched by the Syrian regime on al Yadouda village in the western suburbs of Daraa - July 29, 2021



Despite the aforementioned agreements throughout Daraa governorate, Nawa city in the western suburbs of Daraa was subjected to artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces, which resulted in [the deaths of two civilians](#), including a woman, and injured others, on November 29.

2021 was the best year compared to the previous decade in terms of the use of prohibited weapons, as we documented only one incident in which Russian forces used cluster munitions. Meanwhile, we were unable to document any attacks using incendiary weapons, chemical weapons or barrel bombs during this year.

Factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham continued their artillery shelling of areas under the control of Syrian regime forces in the suburbs of Hama, Idlib and Aleppo, in response to the bombardment of the areas under their control, with most of these attacks being launched against military sites.

The last quarter of October witnessed a large military build-up by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham to the Jisr al Shoghour area in the western suburbs of Idlib (Jisr al Shoghour city and its northwestern suburbs), and the Jabal al Turkman area in the northern suburbs of Latakia, with the aim of eliminating one of the Islamist groups, namely Jund Allah, most of whose members are foreign nationals. As a result, violent clashes erupted between the two parties, which ended on October 28, with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham tightening its full control over the area.

Syrian Democratic Forces bombed areas in northern Syria under the control of the Syrian National Army factions, mainly Afrin city and its suburbs, resulting in the deaths of dozens of people and damage to civilian facilities. The shelling also targeted the cities of Izaz and al Bab and the towns of the eastern suburbs of Jarablos. The Syrian National Army factions responded with similar shelling on the areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces.

In 2021, we recorded dozens of killings among fighters of extremist Islamist groups resulting from targeting by drones which we believe belong to the US-led coalition, with the bombardment targeting military vehicles belonging to these groups. On December 3, an attack by a US-led Coalition drone resulted in [the killing of a former member](#) of the Guardians of Religion organization (Hurras al Din), who was riding a motorcycle on the main road between al Mastouma village and Ariha city in the suburbs of Idlib governorate; the same bombardment injured six members of a family of civilians, as the car they were in passed nearby the motorcycle. On December 6, the US Central Command announced in [a press conference](#) that it was responsible for the attack that targeted an 'al Qaeda leader' and caused civilian casualties.

Insecurity prevailed in most areas of Syria in 2021, with SNHR documenting several killings by unknown persons in Daraa governorate, most of which were against former fighters who had conducted settlements with the Syrian regime. The killings were not limited to Daraa governorate, however, although the vast majority of them occurred there, with the eastern governorates also witnessing killings, some of which were against tribal elders, while killings also took place in the Idlib region.

We also recorded dozens of killings in most Syrian areas at the hands of persons/ parties that we were unable to identify. In 2021, we recorded several cases of suicide, more than those documented in previous

years, some of them by children; we believe that the deteriorating living conditions and the accompanying effects on social conditions are the main cause in the majority of these cases.

In 2021, we also monitored bombings in areas under the control of the Syrian National Army forces in the suburbs of Aleppo, the suburbs of Raqqa, and the suburbs of Hasaka, where it is difficult for us to identify the perpetrators of the bombings, which resulted in the death and injury of dozens of civilians. The most prominent of these incidents was the [explosion of a car bomb whose source we were unable to identify](#) on January 31, 2021, in the al Markez al Thaqafi Street, in Izaz city center in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which resulted in the deaths of six civilians, including two female children and a woman, and the injury of 20 others.

In 2021, civilian casualties continued to occur as a result of the explosion of remnants of previous bombardment, unexploded ordnance and mines. Most of these incidents took place in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, Hama and Idlib, and in areas under the control of Syrian regime forces, resulting in the death of dozens of civilians, including women and children. There is great difficulty in determining which parties are responsible for planting landmines, due to the multiplicity of forces controlling the areas in which these explosions occurred, with the high number of victims indicating that none of the controlling forces have made any significant efforts in the process of clearing landmines, or in attempting to determine their locations and fence them off, or to warn the local populations about their presence. We have documented dozens of deaths as a result of the explosion of landmines, with the most prominent case being the deaths of 18 civilians, including 11 women, as a result of a landmine explosion near a vehicle carrying a group of civilians who were out collecting truffles on the outskirts of al Shahatiya village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate on March 7. The Syrian Network for Human Rights attaches great importance to cooperating with the bodies involved in demining by working to create maps showing the locations where the regime planted landmines in order to contribute to limiting their deadly effects on civilians.

The Ein Eisa district in the northern suburbs of Raqqa witnessed several clashes between the Syrian National Army forces and Syrian Democratic Forces throughout the year, accompanied by bombings, without any change in the distribution of zones of control.

After ISIS lost control of most areas in 2019, the organization adopted a policy of launching hit-and-run attacks, which escalated in 2021, targeting sites belonging to Syrian regime forces, as well as killing civilians in several areas in the governorates of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour, and in al Hawl Camp in the suburbs of Hasaka, whose residents include families linked to former ISIS members.

The organization has also claimed responsibility for several operations targeting fuel tanks and military vehicles belonging to Syrian regime forces in the eastern region, especially on the road between Hama and Raqqa. The Badiya of Deir Ez-Zour suburbs and Raqqa also witnessed sporadic battles launched by Syrian regime forces, backed by Russian warplanes, against ISIS affiliated elements.



Continuous violations against children and women:

Children continue to be the group worst affected by the violations committed by all the perpetrators in Syria, with Syria's children having been subjected to or commonly witnessing atrocious violations such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, in addition to systematic torture and forced displacement. The UN Secretary-General's [third report](#) on children and the armed conflict in Syria, submitted to the UN Security Council on April 23, indicated that the killing, maiming, conscription and use of children were among the most widely verified violations in the country. The report added that the actual number of grave violations against children far exceeded the number verified in the report.

As a result of the sharp deterioration in economic conditions throughout Syria and the high prices, which have more than doubled compared to what they were in previous years, millions of children in Syria are at risk of starvation and malnutrition; on February 18, Save the Children issued [a statement](#) expressing its grave 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 by of 35% in just four months". On March 10, UNICEF issued a [press release](#) stating that 90 percent of children in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance, a 20 per cent increase in the past year alone, with more than half a million children under the age of five in the country suffering from stunted growth as a result of chronic malnutrition. The deteriorating economic conditions have also caused an increase in the phenomenon of child labor and their exploitation to do work that is not commensurate with their age and physical capabilities in return for low wages. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights monitored the spread of the phenomenon of beggary among children, in addition to the phenomenon of collecting food from garbage dumps.

The increasing magnitude of the violations committed against the children of Syria and the economic and social pressures resulting from them have all had significant psychological repercussions on children, who are left in desperate need of special care at both the psychological and physical health levels, leading to a rise in suicides among them; this was indicated by the Save the Children [report](#) issued on April 29, noting that the suicide incidents among children in northwestern Syria had significantly increased, with the number of suicides in the area rising sharply over the previous year, jumping by 86% from the first three months of 2020; the report stated that one in five recorded suicide attempts and deaths are children.

The phenomenon of abandoned foundlings in all regions of Syria has also increased in 2021, which appears to be caused by the catastrophic economic deterioration, threatening a steady increase in the number of children of “unknown parentage”, which will affect Syria’s societal structure in the future. In addition to the violations that children have been subjected to, they have been deprived of their most basic rights stipulated in international covenants, most notably the right to education; schools and educational centers that escaped destruction as a result of bombing and military operations at the hands of the perpetrator parties were turned into military headquarters, depriving millions of children permanently or intermittently of education.

The Syrian regime continued its policy of psychologically manipulating children to serve its own interest, brainwashing and indoctrinating them from young childhood onwards with its Ba’athist ideology by enrolling them in the al Ba’ath Vanguard Organization²⁰ as a precondition for their access to education in the areas under its control; in 2021, the regime even used children to prepare for the ‘presidential election’ farce, with the Ba’ath Vanguard Organization organizing several events in February under the slogan ‘Our hope is Bashar, to Continue the Journey,’ in implementation of the recommendations of the [Ba’ath Vanguard’s 37th Conference](#), which took place on January 17th. The Syrian Network for Human Rights condemned the Syrian regime’s cynical exploitation of children in this exercise in indoctrination, using them to promote the idea of the regime’s permanence in power, and withholding children’s freedom of expression, despite this being guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is ratified by the Syrian regime.



The opening ceremony of the Ba’ath Vanguard Organization for the Children’s Parliament session in Latakia, under the slogan ‘Our hope is Bashar, to Continue the Journey,’ - February 24, 2021

²⁰ A popular organization in which all Syrian school children from grades one to six in basic education are enrolled, with affiliation with being mandatory. It aims to nurture and educate children in directive education according to the vision of the state-ruling Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party
<http://www.syrianpioneers.org.sy/>

Meanwhile, most of the parties in Syria continued in 2021 to use children into the armed conflict by conscripting them into the ranks of these parties' military forces, either by enticing them to do so or kidnapping them for conscription. This included the [Syrian Democratic Forces](#), which established training camps for child soldiers in areas far from the children's original areas of residence, with the abducted children prevented from communicating with their families; many families of kidnapped children were threatened that they or their children would be subjected to violence if they reported their children's conscription to international or human rights organizations. In addition, the families were prevented from visiting their children, and were subjected to verbal humiliation and expulsion if they attempted to do so.

On June 21, 2021, the United Nations published [the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict](#), in which it affirmed the continuation of the high levels of violations committed by all parties to the conflict against children in Syria, especially the continuing high numbers associated with the conscription, use, killing and maiming of children, and the attacks on schools and hospitals. The report placed Syrian regime forces on the related blacklist along with the Houthis and the Myanmar army.

In 2021, we monitored various patterns of violations committed against Syrian women, including egregious violations, and we can confirm that none of the egregious violations against them has stopped; given the scale of violations that occurred against men, including killing, arrest and enforced disappearance, we have noticed a radical change in the roles of women, as the percentage of women who became responsible for families which include orphans and children have increased; women have responsibilities that have increased due to the reality of continuous displacement. On October 11, 2021, coinciding with International Day of the Girl Child, the [International Rescue Committee](#) issued a report in which it ranked Syria among the five most dangerous places in the world for girls. A survey conducted by the organization in northwest Syria found that forced child marriage has become common for fear of sexual exploitation, abuse and kidnapping, adding that 70% of girls and women surveyed said that child brides were at increased risk of domestic violence. On October 21, 2021, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security released [the third edition of the global Women Peace and Security Index \(WPS Index\)](#), which draws on recognized data sources in 170 countries. The report ranked Syria in the penultimate rank as the worst country in the world in terms of women's peace and security, followed by Afghanistan in last place. According to the report, Syria is the worst in the world with regard to organized violence against women, and the worst at the regional level with regard to the safety of women in society.



The living and economic reality in Syria:

The terrible security conditions and the continued perpetration of various types of violations are clearly reflected in the collapse of Syria's economy, which is suffering from a near-total disintegration of the country's financial, material, human and social capital; the Syrian regime has squandered the Syrian state's reserves in its war against the Syrian people, beginning with its efforts to crush popular demonstrations, which turned into an internal armed conflict; among the greatest expenses are maintaining the army and its massive arsenal, as well as paying the salaries of tens of thousands of employees in the security services and the shabiha. Over the past decade, more than half and deepening of the Syrian people have been internally displaced or became refugees, with vertical societal divisions occurring between sects and groups of society, as well as horizontal schisms due to the terrible material disparity that has occurred since 2011 to date. The Syrian economy is still moving strongly towards further collapse, with the state's cash reserves currently estimated at nearly one billion dollars, while the per capita annual share is only about 500 dollars. According to the briefing of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, on October 27, 2021²¹, nearly 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line. In 2021, we noticed an unprecedented spread of the phenomena of begging and of whole families sleeping in the streets, and scavenging for food leftovers from garbage containers for survival.

Syrian regime-controlled areas: The areas vary in the extent of damage inflicted on them according to the controlling force, and the areas controlled by the Syrian regime appear to be the worst; according to reports issued by the Syrian regime government, the salaries of state employees range from 70,000 to 90,000 Syrian pounds per month, which is equivalent to approximately 25 to 40 US dollars²², with the Syrian pound losing up to 92% of its purchasing value. The Central Bank of Syria, which is run by the Syrian regime government, issued on January 24 a 5,000-pound banknote²³, which is the largest ever to be offered for circulation in Syria as of this writing.

The Syrian regime government has been unable to provide the most basic necessities of daily life, such as water, electricity and bread, while neither of the Syrian regime's allies, Russia and Iran, are contributing to providing these services, with some areas witnessing power outages for more than 15 continuous hours per day²⁴, along with increases in electricity prices of up to 100% for the household sector, with these new prices implemented as of the beginning of November, according to the website of the pro-Syrian regime [al Watan newspaper](#).

²¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-118>

²² Syria TV. \$26 for PhD holders... the regime publishes the salary scale for employees in Syria. . <https://www.syria.tv/120969>

²³ SANA, CBS releases a new Syrian 5,000-pound banknote. <http://sana.sy/en/?p=219048>

²⁴ Reuters, Far from war's front lines, life in Syria is still tough. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-damascus-idUSKBN16D22A>

Citizens also suffered from water cuts for hours and sometimes days at a time, [forcing residents of some areas to buy non-potable water from tanks](#). As for bread, which is the basic dietary staple for the majority of the Syrian people, bread prices have increased by about 125% compared to the previous year. 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.”

The prices of fuel materials (diesel, gasoline, domestic and industrial gas) also witnessed several increases, which directly affected the prices of other materials, especially foodstuffs and medicines. We note that the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection raised the price of subsidized premium gasoline several times in 2021 by a total amount of [approximately 230%](#) of its value at the beginning of the year.

The pharmaceutical sector is another of the sectors worst affected by the decisions taken by the Syrian regime government, which has deprived a large segment of patients, especially those suffering from chronic diseases, from obtaining their medicines, whether these are unavailable in pharmacies, due to the suspension of some drug laboratories, or because of their excessively expensive price which leaves patients unable to afford them. On December 17, the [SANA news agency](#) published an announcement from the Syrian regime government’s Higher Technical Committee for Medicine, which stated that the committee had issued a decision to increase the prices of medicines by 30%; the agency quoted a statement by Obeida Qatee, the Assistant Minister of Health for Pharmacy and Drug Affairs in the Syrian regime’s government, in which he said, “Some factory owners demanded an increase in drug prices by 100 percent, but the Higher Technical Committee for Medicine decided to increase it by 30 percent to ensure the continuation of the production cycle in pharmaceutical laboratories at this stage, taking into account the economic conditions.” In reality, medicines were sold in pharmacies at two or three times the price specified by the Syrian regime government’s decision, according to a report published by [al Watan newspaper](#) on December 22.

The promised rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas and towns that were subjected to destruction in the areas where the Syrian regime regained control are almost non-existent, with SNHR not recording any operations to remove rubble; we at the SNHR believe that this negligence on the regime’s part is wholly deliberate, with the regime, which has exhausted the state’s resources through expenditure on bombardment and torture operations, requiring others to step in to undertake reconstruction and restoration operations, while we monitored many municipalities removing and demolishing structures for their failure to meet building regulations, mostly with the aim of seizing control of these locations, despite numerous families living in them; most of the families who had been living in these buildings had already been displaced from their homes in other regions.

In northwestern Syria: The region continues to suffer from a huge number of displaced people, amounting to about 2.8 million²⁵, who are the poorest groups in society, suffering from severe unemployment and dependent mainly on humanitarian aid²⁶; the region depends on the Turkish lira in its economic dealings, but this currency was subjected to massive shocks in the second half of the past year 2021, which negatively affected the economic conditions in that region, in particular the manipulation of prices, which rose sharply but were not reduced when the value of the Turkish lira rose again; [fuels, household gas and bread were among the worst affected materials](#); the constant fear of renewed bombing by the Syrian regime and Russia also prevents the region from implementing investment projects in the medium and long terms, which is the primary goal of the intermittent attacks by the Russian-Syrian alliance.

The areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and the affiliated Salvation Government: These areas suffered from similar conditions to the areas under the control of the Syrian opposition, with the former distinguished by issuing several arbitrary statements according to which they prevented the entry of some commodities, especially vegetables, from Afrin areas in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo to the areas of Idlib suburbs through the al Ghazawiya crossing in the western suburbs of Aleppo, which are used by citizens in this season as supplies for the winter, arousing a wave of resentment among residents because this will lead to the monopoly of these goods and the increase in their prices, just as the prices of some materials that are monopolized by some institutions and merchants such as eggs, gas and diesel increased.

In the summer of 2021, the region witnessed heat waves that increased the suffering of civilians in light of the scarcity of electricity or water, especially in the camps scattered across the region. In June, we also recorded the outbreak of large fires in forested areas in the western Jisr al Shoghour in Idlib suburbs, causing material losses to crops.

Finally, **in the areas under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces in northeastern Syria:** The closure of the al Ya'rubiya border crossing due to the Russian veto contributed to the deterioration of the economic situation, in addition to the widespread corruption and looting of wealth by the Self-Management Authority, especially of oil and gas, and the authority's failure to disclose its financial returns, [estimated at approximately \\$120 million annually](#); we documented many demonstrations by residents of the region demanding an improvement in the service and living situation, as well as job opportunities for the unemployed.

The cities of Hasaka and Qameshli witnessed a stifling crisis in the availability of bread in January 2021, as a result of strike action by bakery owners due to high production costs and the authorities' failure to support the bakeries with the allocated quantities of wheat. One of the reasons for the bread cut crisis in most areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces was the high prices of a sack of flour and the smuggling of these materials to areas controlled by the Syrian regime.

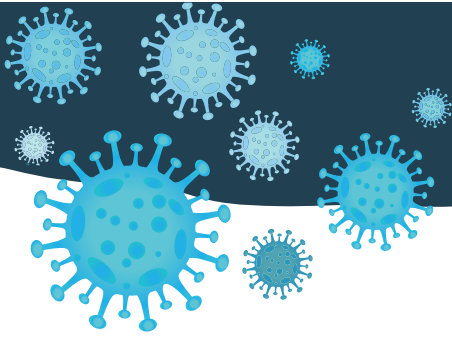
²⁵ UNHCR, Cross-border Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/north-west-syria-cross-border-humanitarian-response-fact-sheet-august-0>

²⁶ UNHCR, Syria Fact Sheet (January 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-syria-fact-sheet-january-2021>

We recorded an unprecedented rise in fuel prices in the region; on May 17, the Syrian Democratic Forces' Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria issued [Decision No. 119](#), which stipulates increasing fuel prices in areas under its control by between 100% and 350%. As a result of this decision, most areas in the governorates of Hasaka and Deir Ez-Zour saw dozens of demonstrations and protests the following day, calling for the decision to be rescinded, with protesters cutting off roads and participating in strike action that [affected shops](#) in some cities and towns in Hasaka, such as al Malekiya and Amouda in the suburbs of Hasaka. Syrian Democratic Forces personnel [confronted](#) these peaceful demonstrations with live bullets and arrests, with [SNHR](#) documenting [the deaths](#) of [six civilians](#), including [one child](#), in addition to the injury of five others, in this gunfire, and the arrest of five civilians in al Shaddadi city and surrounding villages in the southern suburbs of Hasaka.

We also documented mass demonstrations by the people of several towns and villages in Deir Ez-Zour, Raqqa and the southern suburbs of Hasaka protesting against the poor security, service and economic situation throughout the year. On May 31, [Manbej](#) city and its [suburbs](#) east of Aleppo governorate saw a comprehensive strike of markets and shops, and popular demonstrations in several areas to protest against the Syrian Democratic Forces' practices, including their imposition of forced conscription, arrests and rising prices. The peaceful demonstrations lasted for two days, with the protesters were subjected to shooting that caused casualties; this was followed by the protesters reaching an agreement with the dignitaries of the region to stop the protests and end the strike action in exchange for the authorities ending the Self-Defense Law.

The deterioration in living conditions has caused a wider spread of unemployment, beggary and homelessness, with the rates of kidnappings, thefts, murders and suicides increasing in 2021, compared to the previous year 2020, especially in areas controlled by Syrian regime forces. We have addressed this issue in [many reports](#) we released throughout 2021.



COVID-19 pandemic:

2021 witnessed a rise in the number of infections and deaths resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic throughout Syria, due to the continued almost complete absence of precautionary measures and great recklessness by the various controlling forces, and the inability of the people to comply with these measures due to the dire economic and social conditions. The health sector, which collapsed as a result of the violations it was subjected to over the ten years of the conflict, was the sector most affected by the pandemic in all regions of Syria. On January 7, 2021, [al Watan newspaper](#) quoted the head of the Syrian Doctors Syndicate, Dr. Kamal Asaad Amer, as announcing the deaths of 130 doctors, of whom 100 were confirmed to have died due to being infected with the COVID-19 virus since the emergence of the pandemic; while the rest supposedly died of other causes, some of these are suspected to have also been infected with the virus, although it's believed that this was not officially acknowledged as the cause of death because it was not diagnosed; Dr. Amer said that Syria has been losing its medical personnel due to the increase in deaths among them.

Despite the large numbers of infections and the near-total collapse of the health sector, the Syrian regime's government continued its policy of indifference and disregard for the seriousness of the pandemic; several measures were taken that reflected the extent of the Syrian regime's indifference to the lives of Syrians in the areas under its control. On February 23, 2021, the Syrian regime's [Ministry of Tourism announced](#) the [resumption of religious tourism](#) from Iraq to Syria, despite the spread of the pandemic in the two countries; although Issam al Amin, General Director of al Mouwasat Hospital, claimed that this decision would not increase the rate of spread of the coronavirus in the country due to the precautionary measures that would be followed.

The government team set up by the Syrian regime to follow up measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic [decided](#) not to extend the decision to suspend work or reduce the number of workers in public institutions that it had taken at the beginning of the month in reaction to the increase in cases of COVID-19 infection, so that the worker's working hours return to normal in official departments as of April 22. The absence of precautionary measures in the areas under the control of Syrian regime forces, the [continuation](#) of [social activities](#) and [gatherings](#) in the markets, and the failure to take serious measures to limit them, to reduce the transmission of infection among citizens contributed to the rapid spread of the pandemic. The gatherings and rallies organized and imposed by the Syrian regime, coinciding with the 'presidential elections' in May and the beginning of June, in the absence of any form of the recommended precautionary measures to avoid infection with the coronavirus, had a clear effect in contributing to the increase in the number of infections in the areas under the regime control.

The regions of northwestern and eastern Syria are no better off than the areas under the control of Syrian regime forces in terms of the spread of the pandemic in light of the economic deterioration, overcrowding in IDP camps, and the absence of any implementation of serious measures by the controlling parties to limit its spread, in addition to the destruction that befell those areas as a result of the successive military campaigns, which have prevented civilians from having eligible housing equipped with services that could contribute to the implementation of the precautionary measures recommended by the World Health Organization.

Statistics issued by official authorities²⁷ in the three main areas of control in Syria showed that they recorded the highest monthly number of infections during 2021, where the highest monthly number in the areas under the control of Syrian regime forces since the emergence of the pandemic in 2020, was recorded in October 2021, reaching 9,199 cases (approximately 19% of the total announced infections until the end of 2021). Meanwhile, in the areas under the control of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army, the highest monthly number of infections was recorded in September 2021, reaching 34,682 cases (approximately 38% of the total announced infections until the end of 2021), while in the areas under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, the highest number of infections was in October 2021, reaching 7,559 cases (approximately 21% of the total announced infections until the end of 2021).

This proves that none of the controlling parties in Syria have taken any serious precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic since the announcement of its emergence, causing the disease to spread steadily, resulting in the death of large numbers of citizens; we have mentioned this in a large number of [news articles](#) and in many reports over the [past months](#).

²⁷ Statistics for the areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces based on the reports of the Media Office of the Syrian regime's Ministry of Health:

<https://www.facebook.com/MinistryOfHealthSYR/>

Statistics for areas under the control of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army based on the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN) reports:

<https://www.acu-sy.org/covid19/>

Statistics for the areas under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces based on the reports of the Self-Management authority of Northern and Eastern Syria:

<https://www.facebook.com/smensyria/>



The most prominent violation of the sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime:

In 2021, the operations of supplying the Syrian regime with oil continued by Syrian Democratic Forces (mainly Kurdish Democratic Union Party forces), which began in 2012 and has continued ever since, despite the issuance of the Caesar Act and its entry into force in June 2020.

Oil-smuggling operations depend on the use of land routes as well as water crossings on the Euphrates River; Syrian Democratic Forces have resorted to developing a mechanism for transporting oil between the two banks of the Euphrates since 2019, by extending plastic pipelines through which oil is transported between the two banks of the Euphrates River, while Syrian Democratic Forces put the water crossings under heavy security, and organize their work.

In the first half of 2021, we monitored a large movement of oil tanker trucks, which we believe belong to the al Qatirji Company, on their way to the oil fields under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces in Hasaka governorate. We also monitored trucks at al Houra crossing, south of al Tabaqa city in the western suburbs of Raqqa, coming from the areas controlled by the Syrian regime towards the oil fields under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces in Hasaka governorate.

In July 2021, we issued a [report documenting](#) what we had recorded of oil smuggling operations between the areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces and the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces. The report focused on the extent of the great benefit that the Syrian regime derives from these operations, and its use of them in continuing to commit atrocious violations.

Syria is among the largest exporters of drugs in 2021:

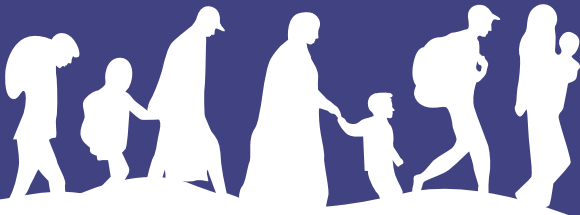
The Syrian regime not only plundered the natural resources in Syria and harnessed them to its advantage at its citizens' expense, in violation of all international norms, but also went beyond that by actively contributing to harming the citizens of other countries through exporting narcotics through its land and sea crossings in large quantities, operations which we do not believe could be completed under a highly centralized and repressive regime like Syria's without the complicity of prominent regime figures, and which take place and are facilitated by the ruling regime itself, which may periodically confiscate one or two shipments to give the false impression that it is fighting rather than facilitating and benefiting from the drug trade.

Syria has turned into one of the most prominent drug-exporting countries in the world, according to a report issued on April 27, 2021, by [the Center for Operational Analysis and Research \(COAR\)](#), with most of the smuggled shipments from Syria passing through Lebanese territory. On April 23, 2021, the Saudi al Ekhbariya TV station published a video in a [tweet](#) on the TV's official account on Twitter, in which it reported that an attempt to smuggle 2.4 million narcotic pills hidden inside a shipment of pomegranates coming from Lebanese territory had been thwarted. Meanwhile, [the Guardian](#) reported in an article published on May 7, 2021, that in the two years prior to the shipment being confiscated in Saudi Arabia, at least 15 such drug shipments had been thwarted in the Middle East and Europe. The newspaper added, quoting six officials from various European and Middle Eastern countries' intelligence services, that all these shipments had come from Syria or via the Lebanese border.

On July 19, 2021, the British Economist website published a [report](#) in which it said that Syria had turned into a narco-state, with Captagon pills being its main export material.

On June 16, 2021, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) website [issued](#) a report in which it spoke about the recent boom in the drug trade in Syria and how this benefits people close to the family of the Syrian regime's president. On August 16, 2021, Le Figaro [published](#) a feature article about the smuggling of fuel transported inside trucks loaded with gravel from Lebanon to the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces which return loaded with Captagon pills.

On December 5, 2021, the [New York Times](#) published an in-depth investigative report into the drug trade in Syria. The investigation stated that the drug trade, which is managed by individuals close to the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, has turned Syria into the largest exporter of drugs in the world after its illegal exports of narcotics exceeded the sum of its other exports. The investigation added that much of the production and distribution operations are carried out under the supervision of the Fourth Division in the Syrian regime army, which is headed by Maher al Assad, brother of Bashar al Assad. The newspaper report added that among the other individuals involved were more figures close to the government, in addition to the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, and indicated that in recent years, large shipments of smuggled narcotics have been seized in several countries, the source of which was a port in Syria controlled by the Syrian regime. A [CNN](#) report on December 12, 2021, stated that Syria has turned from the largest exporter of olive oil, spices and handicrafts to the largest exporter of drugs, and that the money generated by the drug trade, estimated at millions of dollars, goes into the pockets of those in power to increase their wealth, while the Syrian people live in a tragic situation.



Displacement and forced displacement

The most notable displacements in 2021 took place in Daraa governorate, which witnessed several clashes between Syrian regime and allied forces and the people of the region, the pace of which periodically escalated, turning into a siege and military operations that caused the displacement of dozens of families; the most notable displacements we recorded are: (1) on January 27, Tafas city in the western suburbs of Daraa has witnessed a displacement movement, the first of its kind since the city was subject to a settlement agreement two years ago, with some 10,000 residents (about a third of the city's population) being displaced due to the threats issued by the Syrian regime's Fourth Division to launch an attack on the city; (2) the besieged neighborhoods of Daraa city, namely Daraa al Balad, Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood, the Palestinian refugee camp and the camp for IDPs from Golan, saw a [movement of displacement](#) on foot towards other neighborhoods in Daraa city that are under the control of Syrian regime forces, as a result of the bombardment of their areas during August, with some of those displaced forced to take shelter in a number of schools and public facilities. Since August 30, the towns of the western suburbs of Daraa have seen another [movement of displacement](#) due to the escalation of the military campaign against these areas.

The events in southern Syria also led to two agreements which resulted in the forced displacement of former fighters in the ranks of the Armed Opposition factions, who were displaced towards northern Syria:

(1) On May 20, 2021, 30 families of former fighters in the ranks of the Armed Opposition who refused to make a settlement with the Syrian regime left Om Batenah village in the suburbs of Quneitra heading towards northwest Syria, following a forced displacement agreement under Russian sponsorship. The agreement was reached following an attack by unknown gunmen on Syrian regime checkpoints in the vicinity of the village at the end of April 2021, as a result of which Syrian regime forces besieged the village and shelled it with mortars on May 1, demanding that the fighters leave in exchange for not restricting the villagers and releasing two of the villagers. Upon the arrival of the displaced to Abu al Zandin crossing east of Aleppo, they were prevented from entering the areas controlled by the Syrian National Army until the evening of the following day, May 21, when they were allowed to cross to the northern suburbs of Idlib through al Ghazawiya crossing, passing through the northern suburbs of Aleppo, arriving the next day at shelters designated for IDPs in Deir Hassan area.



Photo shows people gathering in preparation for displacement from Om Batenah village, Quneitra suburbs, to northern Syria - May 20, 2021

(2) Following the Syrian regime forces' military escalation in Daraa governorate at the end of June, an agreement was reached to displace about 80 people who left in two convoys towards northern Syria through the Abu al Zandin crossing, separating the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces and Syrian National Army. The first was on August 24, carrying eight people, followed by another convoy on August 26 that carried 70 people, including women and children of forcibly displaced persons.

In northwest Syria, almost none of the displaced people have returned to their homes from which they were displaced, even though some are only a few kilometers away; the continuation of the military operations launched by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in northwestern Syria has exacerbated the crisis faced by the IDPs, especially those residing in the camps, with the Syrian-Russian alliance forces' bombardment expanding to include areas near the center of the region and other areas close to the Syrian-Turkish border, which include the largest IDP camps in Syria; we recorded that the cities of [Sarmada](#) (on October 19), [al Dana](#) (on October 25) and other locations were bombed by these forces. Another attack by the same forces on an [IDP camp](#) in Termanein town in Idlib suburbs on October 27 resulted in the death of a child, as well as injuries to other people, and damage to the camp.

Meanwhile, the suffering of the IDPs and residents of the northern Syrian camps continues due to the climatic conditions, as they suffer in the winter from freezing snow and rainstorms and the resulting floods that sweep away the tents and drown their contents, forcing their residents into further displacement and exacerbating their suffering. In the summer, meanwhile, high temperatures and the lack of shelter protecting the people from the searing heat leads to the spread of diseases related to high temperatures, especially among the most vulnerable groups, primarily children and elderly people.



Photo shows rising floodwaters around IDPs' tents in al Amin Camp located near Kafr Orouq village in northern Idlib, following torrential rainfall in the area - January 14, 2021

We also documented the outbreak of many fires in [the camps](#), due to the [incorrect](#) use of cooking and heating methods, and the explosion of solar energy batteries as a result of the high temperatures, causing human and material losses.



On September 17, 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated in [a report](#) that the number of people in need of urgent assistance in order to face the winter season is about 2 million displaced people in Syria, and that 180,000 families need cash assistance to secure their basic needs. The UNHCR indicated that its operations for this year have so far received only 39% of the total funding required for Syria.

On October 27, the US Special Envoy for Syria, [Geir Pedersen](#), stated during a briefing to discuss developments in Syria at the Security Council that more than 12 million Syrians remain displaced, whether inside their homeland or as refugees, with poverty levels close to 90%.

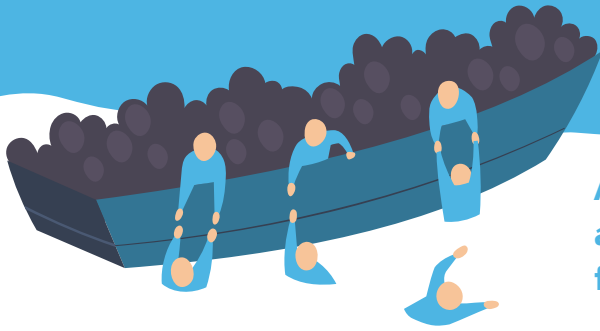
In conjunction with the deterioration of the economic situation and the severe impact of this on the situation in the camps, the [World Food Program](#) informed humanitarian organizations operating in north-western Syria, via e-mail on September 7, 2021, that the size of the food rations had been reduced by one bottle of oil and one bag of bulgur from each portion, making the family share (consisting of five people) four liters of oil, 5.7 kg of bulgur, 5 kg of sugar, 15 kg of wheat flour, 7.5 kg of rice, 6 kg of red lentils, 6 kg of chickpeas and 1 kg of salt, as of October 2021, as the contents of the food basket were reduced. We note that this was not the first time that this measure has been taken, which negatively affected the beneficiaries as they depend on these baskets to secure food, in light of the lack of job opportunities and the spread of unemployment.

The al Hawl Camp, located east of Hasaka city near the Iraqi-Syrian border, currently housing around 65,000 people, including families of former ISIS members of various nationalities, is a detention camp run by Syrian Democratic Forces whose residents live under inhumane conditions; on March 29, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, said [in a press release](#) issued after his visit to Syria, speaking about al Hawl Camp: “[This is really the place where hope is going to die. It is one of the largest, if not the largest, child protection crisis with which we are confronted today.](#)” He called on all states to take responsibility for their nationals in the camp, and to make all efforts to repatriate residents lawfully, respecting family unity and fully supporting reintegration. On November 30, 2021, Amnesty International issued a [report](#) in which it said that at least 27,000 children are being held in dire conditions in al Hawl Camp, where they are arbitrarily deprived of their liberty. The organization called on the Self-Management forces that control the camp to establish a clear mechanism to return Syrian children, their mothers and their caregivers to their home areas. We note that in 2021, the camp witnessed killings of residents at the hands of unknown gunmen who we were unable to identify, and who are believed to be affiliated with ISIS cells, with the death toll reaching 76 civilians, including 10 children and 23 women. The camp also witnessed the outbreak of a fire on February 27, the largest in terms of the number of casualties, as it resulted in [seven civilians](#) (six children and one woman) being burnt to death.

Syrian Democratic Forces continued to allow the residents of al Hawl Camp to leave²⁸ during 2021, with the number of groups that were allowed to leave reaching about 15 (comprising 1,200 families). In the same context, a number of European countries, such as Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Canada, France, Russia, Ukraine, UK and Albania, have repatriated a number of their nationals this year, most of whom are children and women, from families linked to ISIS residing in al Hawl and al Rouj camps in the Hasaka suburbs in coordination with Syrian Democratic Forces. On February 1, [Save the Children](#), in a statement, called on all states with nationals trapped in the camps in northeast Syria to step up efforts to repatriate them, saying that 27,500 children from foreign and Iraqi citizens are now awaiting repatriation. On March 2, Doctors Without Borders issued a [statement](#) expressing its profound concerns about the insecurity facing al Hawl Camp residents, two-thirds of whom are children and women.

The suffering of residents of al Rukban Camp in the eastern suburbs of Homs, near the Syrian-Jordanian border, has also continued, due to numerous problems and challenges, especially regarding health-related issues. On June 11, 2021, the Public and Political Relations Authority of the Syrian Badiya in al Rukban Camp [appealed](#) to the Jordanian government to allow critically ill patients in need of surgical operations to enter Jordanian hospitals in order to save their lives. As for children, particularly those with special needs, the inhumane living conditions inside the camp, and the lack of any means of life, including heating and medical care, means many of them have suffered from the spread of diseases, especially grippé, under a complete siege and the absence of any medical centers.

²⁸ Following the decision 146 issued by Syrian Democratic Forces' Self-Management Authority on October 10, 2020, allowing Syrians in the camp to leave after completing the necessary procedures



Asylum waves continue as violations continue and have never stopped: “Syria is an unsafe for the return of refugees”:

The violence practiced by the various perpetrator parties in Syria, especially the Syrian regime, and the deterioration of living conditions over the years of the conflict have caused waves of displacement and the migration of millions of Syrians to safer areas; [in the latest United Nations](#) census (on March 15, 2021), the number of Syrian refugees worldwide reached 6.6 million, with neighboring countries hosting the largest number of these.

The Syrian regime, under the orders of its Russian ally, continued to promote the ‘safe’ return of refugees, [holding several meetings in 2021](#). Officials of both regimes issued dozens of statements about the numbers of refugees who they claimed had returned to Syria. On July 26, 2021, the Chief of the Russian National Center for State Defense Control Colonel and Head of the Joint Coordination Center for Refugees Returning to Syria, General Mikhail Mizintsev, said, according to the Russian [TASS](#) news agency, that more than two million Syrian citizens have already returned to their homes, claiming that almost one million of this number were refugees who came from abroad, while the rest were internally displaced persons.

Exposing the unreliability of the numbers announced by these officials, however, [United Nations](#) statistics proved the inaccuracy of their claims; according to the latest statistics gathered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in March 2021, the number of refugees has actually reached the highest level since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. On April 8, 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [issued a statement](#) saying, “UNHCR does not consider the recent improvements in security in parts of Syria to be sufficiently fundamental, stable or durable to justify ending international protection for any group of refugees.”

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have issued reports proving the falsity of the claims made in statements by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally that Syria has become safe, with the data gathered by both organizations highlighting the continuation of violations committed by the two regimes and the severe risks facing returning refugees, including harassment, arrest and death due to torture.

In conjunction with the calls made by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally, and despite the harassment experienced by refugees in the countries of asylum, the Syrian Network for Human Rights monitored an escalation in migration waves from Syria as a result of the deterioration of the economic situation in Syria and the escalation of military operations by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in the northwest and

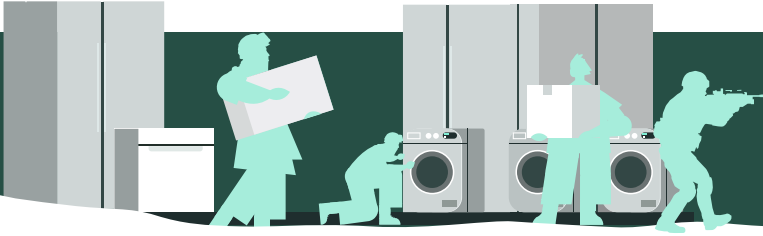
southern regions of the country, in addition to the deteriorating conditions of refugees in neighboring countries, especially Lebanon, with refugees continuing to make illegal journeys in a desperate effort to cross the Mediterranean to reach European Union countries, with these voyages being fraught with danger, whether the refugees set off from Turkey, Lebanon or the Arab Maghreb countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that [“More than 2,500 people died or disappeared at sea while trying to reach Europe”](#) between January and November 2021. On December 22, 2021, [Reuters](#) quoted a report from the Greek Coast Guard which stated that three asylum-seekers had drowned off the Greek island of Folegandros, after a boat believed to be carrying up to 50 people sank. The agency added that the search crews were able to rescue 12 people, most of them from Iraq and Syria, who were transferred to a nearby Greek island, while it is feared that dozens more are missing. In the same week, on December 25, [Agence France-Presse](#) quoted the Greek Coast Guard stating that [“16 people died in the sinking of a boat of migrants in the Aegean Sea”](#) the previous day, December 24; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said of the incident that it was the worst drowning incident in the Aegean Sea this year.

The situation of Syrian refugees worsened in 2021 compared to previous years, with the relative decline of hostilities after the signing of the ceasefire agreement on March 5, 2020, and the campaigns launched by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally for the return of refugees, some European countries hosting refugees began to re-examine some files of asylum applications submitted by Syrians from some areas that were wrongly classified as safe after the cessation of military operations and the Syrian regime forces' control over them. These decisions were condemned by many human rights organizations and bodies, and several reports were issued related to the situation in Syria, all of which confirmed that Syria [is still unsafe for the return of refugees](#), and that any forcible return would endanger the lives of returnees, while some of these reports documented [violations against refugees](#) who returned from Lebanon to Syria at the hands of Syrian regime forces.

The European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) by a majority of votes on March 11, 2021, in which it noted the gravity and the magnitude of human rights violations in Syria perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, describing the situation in Syria as a “disastrous humanitarian crisis.” On September 6, Amnesty International issued a report entitled [“You're going to your death”](#), which talked about numerous violations against refugees returning to areas under the control of the Syrian regime, noting that they were subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, extortion, and even cases of child rape. On November 30, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) released its [report](#) on Common Analysis and Guidance Notes in Syria, in which it emphasizes that the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces do not provide protection to civilians, and stresses that Syria is still not safe for the return of refugees.

The Belarusian-Polish border witnessed the worst crisis for asylum seekers this year, as thousands of asylum seekers, [most of whom](#) came from Syria and Iraq, arrived at the border from mid-2021 onwards, in an attempt to cross to the European Union countries via that border. The humanitarian crisis for these refugees worsened at the beginning of September and reached its climax in mid-November, coinciding with the drop in temperatures and snowfall in that area. Human rights organizations have recorded the deaths of a number of asylum seekers in the area due to temperatures dropping to freezing levels. Those stranded on the Belarusian-Polish border also suffered from [human rights violations](#), including inhumane treatment on both sides of the border, and were deprived of any humanitarian aid after [the Polish authorities declared](#) the area along the border to be a no-go area for anyone except for residents and people living, working or studying in the area, with this policy also preventing the entry of any relief or humanitarian organizations there.

On January 1, 2022, [the International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) issued its eleventh report in a series of global migration reports issued every two years, in which it stated that Syria's border with Turkey is the second largest refugee gateway in the world after the US-Mexico border, and revealed that Syria ranks as the fifth country worldwide in terms of the numbers of asylum seekers from the nation, being preceded only by China, Russia, Mexico, and India, all which are countries with huge populations compared to Syria. The report estimated the number of Syrian refugees around the world at 6.7 million up to the end of 2020, with an increase of 100,000 refugees from 2019; on the Global Peace Index mentioned by the report, Syria came at the bottom of the list at 161 out of 163 countries on the list.



The Syrian regime legalizes property theft and seizes the properties of the forcibly displaced through public auctions:

The Syrian regime and its Iranian ally have taken advantage of the conditions of the armed conflict and the displacement of millions of Syrians to loot as much of their property and lands as possible, especially in the areas of Western and Eastern Ghoutas and the eastern neighborhoods of Damascus.

In 2021, Darayya city witnessed a significant increase in the sale of homes to Iranian figures, especially in the city center, which constitutes an important religious location for Shiite militias, who claim that it houses a shrine to Ms. Sakina Bint Ali. The sale of homes in the area was the logical conclusion to a series of violations that practically undermined residents' ability to return to or live in their villages and towns, with the local authorities refraining from repairing roads and neighborhoods or sewage networks and electricity installations, in addition to resorting to provocative practices against residents wishing to return, such as military checkpoints manned by personnel demanding exorbitant bribes to allow residents to enter; we have also documented the arrests of some residents who wish to return. In light of these obstacles, residents are forced to sell their properties and homes, especially in light of the large sums of money being offered for them.

On January 16, 2021, the Damascus Governorate issued a circular ordering the owners of nearly 750 industrial establishments in the al Qaboun neighborhood to move their facilities outside the capital, Damascus, shortly before launching demolition operations to demolish the industrial area in the neighborhood, with the aim of establishing a commercial and residential center, ignoring the objections of more than 740 residents of al Qaboun to the governorate's plans²⁹. On September 14, 2021³⁰, the head of the Syrian regime issued Decree No. 237 ordering the creation of an organized area located around the northern entrance to Damascus incorporating two real estate areas (al Qaboun - Harasta) in Damascus governorate based on a detailed organizational plan, No. 104, which includes the industrial zone in al Qaboun and parts of the lands belonging to Harasta, with the plan originally announced in July 2019.

In September, the Syrian regime's security committees in the areas of Idlib suburbs (Saraqeb and Abu al Dohour districts) and Qal'at al Madiq area in the northern suburbs of Hama announced public auctions for investment in [agricultural](#) lands planted with [pistachios](#) and olives, and [unplanted](#) lands suitable for growing grains. The majority of the lands offered at auction are owned by displaced people now living in northern Syria in [areas outside](#) the control of the Syrian regime, with some of the other owners of these lands being refugees in neighboring countries. In the second half of September, photos of tables con-

²⁹ Diab: Study of plans for the second and third phases will be completed before the end of this year ... 740 objections to the al Qaboun industrial plan at the regional committee table in Damascus - Al Watan newspaper (alwatan.sy)

³⁰ The regime issues a decree creating an organized area around the northern entrance of Damascus | Zaman al Wasl (zamanalwsl.net)

taining information on these auctions spread on social media, with this information including the names of farmers whose agricultural lands were offered for public auction; we contacted a number of farmers and landowners whose names were mentioned who confirmed to us that their lands had indeed been confiscated and that while this confiscation does not include the transfer of land ownership through official documents, these auctions deprived them of benefiting from their agricultural crops and revenues.

In the eastern region, [specifically](#) in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, the Governorate Directorate in Deir Ez-Zour affiliated with Syrian regime forces issued in September, over several days, lists of agricultural lands, most of which are in the cities and towns of Mouhasan, al Qouriya, al Mayadeen, al Ashara, Swaidan Shamiya and Sbaikhan, the area of which is [estimated](#) at more than 7,000 [hectares](#) and is owned by citizens displaced from their villages and towns west of the Euphrates River in Deir Ez-Zour, who are wanted by the Syrian regime; these lands will be confiscated by the Farmers Union in the governorate, which will supervise them in order to invest and rent them to other farmers in the area. It should be noted that, during the past two years, the Syrian regime has formed several local committees that coordinate between it and the Farmers Union to carry out studies and conduct censuses of the population and of agricultural lands in villages and towns west of the Euphrates River; we will issue a detailed report on these auctions at a later date.



The Iranian military, economic and religious expansion in various areas under the control of the Syrian regime:

On the military level: We monitored the deployment of more Iranian militias (Zainabiyoun - Fatemiyoun - Iraqi Harakat al Nujaba - Syrian Hezbollah - Lebanese Hezbollah) in the Idlib area at Saraqeb, Sheikh Mansour, Ma'aret al Numan, Hass, Kafranbel and Hazarin in the southern suburbs of Idlib, in the form of groups that receive their instructions from command headquarters and operations rooms in the suburbs of Hama and Aleppo, which are run by officers of the Iranian regime's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), most notably the Artillery School, al Nayrab Airbase, Kwairis Airbase in Aleppo, Hama Military Airbase, Jourien Military Camp, and the Deer Protectorate in Hama governorate. The pro-Iranian forces are also present in several areas in Homs governorate, including the T4 and al Dabaa Airbase, and the areas of al Qaryatein, Tadmur, al Sekhna and al Qsair.

In eastern Syria, we monitored tens of Iraqi, Iranian and Lebanese sectarian militias (the IRGC- namely the Popular Mobilization Forces - the Quds Force - the Fatemiyoun Brigade - the Zainabiyoun Brigade - the Nujaba Movement - the Imam Ali Battalions - the Lebanese Hezbollah - the Iraqi Hezbollah - the Sayyid al Shuhada Battalions) concentrated in villages and the towns west of the Euphrates, especially the al Boukamal area near the Syrian-Iraqi border, which is the military base for the gathering of these militias in the area within the headquarters, the majority of which belong to civilians displaced outside the areas controlled by the Syrian regime, especially in the cities of al Boukamal and al Mayadeen in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, where the members of these militias and their families are headquartered in homes seized from civilians.

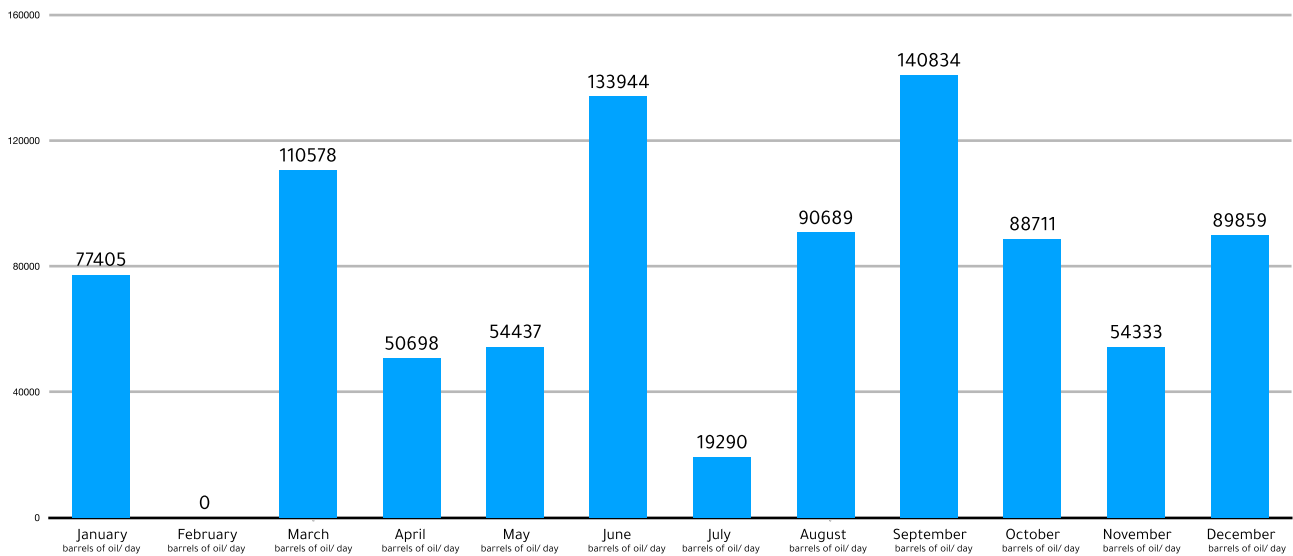
Not only did Iran bring in mercenaries on a sectarian background from Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, but it also intensified its recruitment of Syrian youth, cynically exploiting the widespread unemployment and extreme poverty.

On the economic level: Iran continued to support the Syrian regime with various resources, mainly oil, in violation of US and European sanctions, and despite the fluctuation in issuance rates from one month to another, the statistics issued by the United Against Nuclear Iran "UANI"³¹ show that Iran continued to export oil throughout 2021³² in varying proportions, the highest was in July and September 2021, while the export earnings of Iran's oil exports to the Syrian regime in 2021 exceed those of 2020.

³¹ United Against Nuclear Iran ("UANI") is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI educates the public, policymakers, and businesses about the danger posed by the Iranian regime. It uses Automatic Identification System (AIS), satellite imagery, vessel comparison, tanker classification and shipping data sets to detect all transport and export of Iranian oil and gas condensate

³² United Against Nuclear Iran "UANI": <https://www.unitedagainstanucleariran.com/tanker-tracker>

The 2021 statistics:



On May 24, the pro-Syrian regime al Iqtisadi website [announced](#) that the regime's Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade had granted a registration certificate to a new Iranian company in Aleppo, operating under the name "Badeedeh Tejarat and Fanawry Company" (Phenomenon of Business and Technology), whose proclaimed objectives are: "Establishing, launching and monitoring medical, commercial, educational, productive, service, scientific, technical and creative centers, and exporting and importing technologies, products and services, according to the laws and regulations in force in Syria."

In November, the Exhibition City in Damascus hosted a "Made in Iran" [exhibition](#), with the participation of a large number of Iranian companies, presenting Iranian products which the exhibitors claimed would meet the needs of the Syrian local market for goods, materials, equipment and technologies, especially those that serve the reconstruction process.

In the context of empowering Iranian businessmen and [investors](#) and consolidating their presence in Syria, the "[Damascus and its Countryside Chamber of Industry](#)" on November 17 asked industrialists who wish to resume operations at their partially or completely damaged facilities, to communicate with it, in turn, to present the facility to Iranian investors, in a Syrian-Iranian investment forum on the sidelines of the "Made in Iran" exhibition.

The Iranian commercial center was inaugurated in the free zone in Damascus city, on November 30, two years after its announcement, which Kiwan Kashifi, head of the Iranian-Syrian Joint Chamber, described as "The first Iranian commercial center in Syria that will be the basis of Iranian trade in it. It includes commercial offices that enable Iranian companies from the private sector to carry out trade exchanges between the two countries, noting that the center is important in terms of further consolidating relations and will be a mediator between the Syrian and Iranian chambers of commerce, industry and agriculture." according to the [Syrian News Agency \(SANA\)](#).

On December 3, the Fars news agency quoted Ali Reza [Peymanpak](#) as saying that four agreements were signed between Iran and Syria during the visit of the Iranian Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade to Damascus. He said that this visit and meetings with senior Syrian officials had achieved many achievements and gains that would pave the way for the development of trade between the two countries.

Maritime transportation obstacles are considered one of the most important challenges facing Iran's efforts to revitalize its trade with the Syrian regime and increase its share of the Syrian economy. Therefore, on December 29, 2021, the Iranian regime announced an agreement to inaugurate a railway linking Iran with Syria via Iraq. The [Iranian Student News Agency](#) considered the agreement a major and strategic victory for Iran politically, economically and militarily. This is because it will facilitate the transportation of goods and passengers from Iran to Syria easily and safely.

On the social level: We monitored the continuation of religious pilgrimages from Tehran to the capital, Damascus, at low costs, to "[visit the \[supposed\] Shiite shrines.](#)" The head of the Iranian Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization, Ali Reza Rashidian, visited Damascus on November 7 to discuss the resumption of religious and tourist trips between the two countries.

Through these visits, Iran is trying to woo the residents of the areas surrounding the supposed Shiite shrines, by distributing financial and food aid through associations it has established for this purpose, the most prominent of which are the Thaqalayn Association Center, Jihad al Bina, the Social Charitable Committee, al Zahra Charity, al Amin Foundation, al Sirat Cultural Complex, the Imam al Sajid Foundation, and the Martyrs Foundation. These "charities" aim to spread Iranian Shiite ideology. We have noticed a clear increase in manifestations of the ruling Iranian regime's fundamentalist version of Shiism, with dozens of "latmiyat" being established in public places, most of them in various areas of Damascus city, in addition to the Ein Ali shrine in the Badiya of al Qouriya city, east of Deir Ez-Zour and al Nuqta Mosque in Aleppo city.

Buying massive quantities of property and land: Iran has taken advantage of the displacement and forced displacement that Syria has witnessed over the past 11 years; we have noticed a process of tracking the displaced population with the aim of buying their real estate and lands, specifically targeting the Basateen al Mazza project behind the Iranian embassy and large numbers of other properties in Darayya city, which witnessed a clear escalation in the sale of real estate to Iranian figures last year. Many of the people we contacted told us that the sales that take place in the city do not take place directly between real estate owners and individuals or elements of the Iranian militias, but through mediation and figures affiliated with the regime, in an effort to ensure that it seems the buyer is a Syrian person, not Iranian; the sales focused on the area around the supposed Shiite religious shrine of Ms. Sakina Bint Ali, as well as on the area near the Daraa highway, which witnessed large-scale selling.

On the cultural level: Iran continued to penetrate [Syrian educational institutions](#) to impose the Persian language and culture. The past years have witnessed the signing of several agreements between Iranian and Syrian universities; on August 12, 2021, a meeting took place between the President of Hama University, Muhammad Ziyad Sultan, and the Iranian Cultural Advisor to increase cooperation between the two parties.

VI. Most Prominent Political, Military and Human Rights Events and Investigations Related to Syria in 2021:

We try to explain the correlation between political events, military matters and rapidly changing facts on the ground in order to understand the picture more clearly, while emphasizing that this explanation is in no way a justification for any form of human rights violations by any party.

A. Most prominent political events:

On January 18, 2021, Russian Foreign Minister [Sergey Lavrov held](#) an online press conference during which he outlined Russia's diplomatic achievements in 2020, and discussed the prospects for Moscow's international relations, including with the new US administration, and affirmed that Russia does not intend to expel US forces from Syria or to enter in armed clashes with them, but strongly calls on them not to use force against Syrian regime sites.

On January 21, 2021, [a delegation from the Cairo and Moscow platforms](#)³³ held a meeting in Moscow with Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, with the participants discussing the current status of the political process in Syria and the need to push for the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2254.

Between January 25 and 29, 2021, [the work of the fifth round](#) of the Syrian Constitutional Committee³⁴ meetings began at the United Nations office in Geneva. The UN Special Envoy for Syria, [Geir Pedersen, stated](#) during a press conference held at the end of this round that the participants could not continue the meetings of the Constitutional Committee on Syria without changing the method of work, and that the latest round had been disappointing, without specifying which party was responsible for stalling the negotiations. Pedersen expressed his willingness to travel to Syria in order to discuss how to implement all the broader aspects of Security Council resolution 2254, although he did not specify a new date for the resumption of negotiations.

On February 16 and 17, 2021, the Astana 15 meetings were held in the Russian city of Sochi, in the presence of Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, after a break of nearly a year. [The statement of the 15th Astana Round](#) emphasized the necessity to maintain calm on the ground by fully implementing all agreements on Idlib, and the importance of the Constitutional Committee's role in preparing and drafting a constitutional reform document, the need to increase humanitarian assistance in Syria, and the need to facilitate safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria.

³³ Two Syrian groupings, which were announced in Egypt and Russia in 2014, representing a spectrum of the Syrian opposition

³⁴ The Constitutional Committee was set up by the United Nations in order to draft a new constitution for Syria as part of the political process in accordance with UN Resolution 2254, and it is divided in parallel between the regime, the opposition and representatives of civil society organizations.

On February 18, 2021, [a prisoner exchange](#) took place between the Syrian regime and Israel under Russian auspices (two Syrian captives in exchange for an Israeli captive). We at the SNHR believe that this exchange is 'formal' for purposes that have not been disclosed. While an Israeli captive is usually exchanged for a number of captives, the number this time was limited to two Syrian captives, and it became clear that the first (Nihal al Maqt) was subject to house arrest, while the second (Ziab Qahmouz) refused to be handed over to the Syrian authorities, so the exchange took place with two other captives ([Muhammad Hussein and Tariq al Obeidan](#)), both of whom work as shepherds.

On March 11, 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Michelle Bachelet](#), said on the tenth anniversary of the start of the popular uprising towards democracy in Syria, that "Enforced disappearance is a continuous crime that has an appalling impact on the individual whose fate is unknown and on their family, causing continuing trauma for them and severely curtailing the enjoyment of their human rights."

On March 12, 2021, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued [a statement marking the tenth anniversary of the start of the popular uprising in Syria](#), in which it said that due to outside interference, the domestic political process rapidly turned into an armed conflict; Moscow affirmed its support for a political settlement, asserting that there cannot be a military solution to the Syrian conflict; the statement stressed that the provision of assistance for the voluntary and safe return home of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons would be a major step towards restoring "national unity" in Syria.

On March 12, 2021, the President of the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, issued a legislative decree ([No. 1 of 2021](#)), providing for a general amnesty for the full penalty for the crimes committed by those mandated for the military service before the date of March 12, 2021, with the intention of evading conscription temporarily or permanently. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights believe that this step was taken solely to polish the image of the ruling regime before the presidential elections.

On March 18, 2021, the Syrian regime's People's Assembly approved a [Law on Non-Smuggling of Persons and the Protection of Migrants](#), which consists of 22 articles. The new law penalizes those who carry out operations to smuggle people out of Syria by land or sea.

On March 24, 2021, [the US Department of State](#) called on the Syrian regime to release the detainees in its prisons, obtain information about the whereabouts of the missing, and hold the Syrian regime accountable for its systematic violations of human rights.

On the 29th and 30th of March, 2021, [the Brussels V Conference](#) on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”, chaired by the European Union and the United Nations, was held in the presence of more than 80 states and international organizations. At its conclusion, the assembled states pledged [to provide 3.6 billion euros in 2021](#), a decrease on the 4.9 billion euros raised in 2020 at the [Brussels IV Conference](#), for Syria and for the neighboring countries that host the largest number of Syrian refugees.

On March 31, 2021, the foreign ministers of 18 European states issued [a joint op-ed](#) calling on everyone to take responsibility for fighting impunity and to demand accountability for crimes committed in Syria, regardless of the perpetrator.

On April 7, 2021, [Amnesty International](#) said in its 2020/2021 annual report on the state of the world’s human rights, “Parties to the conflict in Syria continued to commit with impunity serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, and gross human rights abuses. Syrian and Russian government forces carried out direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including hospitals and schools, through aerial bombing of cities in the governorates of Idlib, Hama and Aleppo, displacing close to 1 million people. Government forces continued to impede access to humanitarian aid to civilians.”

On May 2, 2021, the Syrian regime’s president, Bashar al Assad, issued [legislative decree No. 13](#), which included a general amnesty for perpetrators of offenses, misdemeanors and felonies prior to the date of its issuance. Like previous decrees, this one applied only to a specific group that has no connection with the popular uprising. Under this decree, we documented the release of at least 106 detainees held by the Syrian regime, including civilians, government employees, media workers, university students and politicians, who had criticized corruption and the poor living conditions in areas controlled by the Syrian regime, with the period of detention for most ranging between two and six months; most of those released are known for their support of the Syrian regime, especially the media workers among them.

On May 5, 2021, the Foreign and Development Ministers of the Group of Seven (G7), namely Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, at the conclusion of their meeting in the UK capital, London, issued [a statement](#) condemning “the Assad regime and its backers’ ongoing atrocities against the Syrian people and attempts to disrupt regular and sustained humanitarian access into and within Syria, and the politicisation of aid access and delivery.” The statement also called for the full, unhindered humanitarian access into Syria.

On May 26, 2021, in his briefing to the Security Council, Geir O. Pedersen, the [UN Special Envoy for Syria](#), stressed the importance of implementing Security Council [resolution 2254](#), which provides for a political process including elections under a new constitution.

On May 28, 2021, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), at its seventy-fourth session, elected Syria to the membership of the WHO's Executive Board³⁵, representing the Eastern Mediterranean Region, for a three-year term. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights condemn the Syrian regime's election for membership in this board, which is intended to monitor the implementation of the policies of the World Health Organization, despite the regime's lack of commitment to these policies, and despite what the organization itself has acknowledged in several statements, namely that the Syrian regime is accused by UN committees and independent human rights organizations of destroying medical facilities and killing medical personnel, some of them under torture, and demand the regime's immediate expulsion; the countries that did not object to the regime's candidacy bear direct responsibility for this shameful appointment.

On June 5, 2021, [the Dutch media agency NPA](#) published a video that included a statement by Jan Sullins, head of the Dutch intelligence service, in which he spoke about investigations conducted by his team indicating that it is very likely that sarin was used in attacks in Syria, adding that they had determined the responsibility of five of senior Syrian regime officers working in the chemical weapons program for al Latamena attacks in the suburbs of Hama (2016) and Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib (2017).

On June 6, 2021, the Syrian regime government's Ministry of Justice issued [Circular No. 20](#), which requires judicial departments to complete all personal data, especially on the number of detainees held nationwide, to remove the similarity of names and to put a final end to the case of names' dissimilarity. We at the SNHR note that this ridiculous procedure comes after the Syrian regime, over the course of decades, arrested hundreds of people on the pretext of having similar names to wanted individuals, some of whom died due to torture inside its detention centers.

On June 11, 2021, Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, stressed during an [interview with NBC](#) that he did not accept the departure of Assad or his commitment to a political solution due to what Putin claimed is the lack of an alternative to his rule. The Russian president called on the Europeans to sit down for talks with him, and seek compromise solutions that are acceptable for all parties, asserting that this is how stability will be achieved, since, he said, it cannot be achieved by imposing one particular point of view. He reaffirmed his position on the necessity of bringing humanitarian assistance into Syria exclusively through the government of the Syrian regime.

On June 17, 2021, SANA news agency [reported](#) that Hasan Khaddour, the permanent representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations office and other international organizations in Vienna, had submitted his credentials to Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Vienna. This action comes after the spread of dozens of news articles and reports in recent months about the Syrian regime's drug trafficking, which has been taking place with an unprecedented intensity.

³⁵ This is the executive body whose competencies include ensuring the implementation of the decisions and policies of the World Health Assembly, providing advice and recommending draft resolutions to the Assembly for approval, in addition to providing the organization's secretariat with instructions and directions

On June 23, 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [said](#) at the Security Council session on the humanitarian situation in Syria that "The situation today is worse than at any time since the conflict began; 13.4 million people need humanitarian assistance; 12.4 million people are food-insecure." he added, "A failure to extend the Council's authorization would have devastating consequences."

On July 7, 2021, the 16th round of [Astana talks](#) on Syria began in the Kazakh capital of Nur Sultan, with the talks lasting two days, in the presence of the delegations of the Syrian regime and the opposition, in addition to the three guarantor states, namely Russia, Turkey and Iran. The final statement stressed the need to push the political process in Syria forward and called on the United Nations to extend the humanitarian aid delivery mechanism.

On July 23, 2021, the [Russian Ministry of Defense announced](#) in a statement that it would sign 10 agreements with the Syrian regime on the sidelines of the conference on 'the return of Syrian refugees', and would supply the regime with more than 160 tons of humanitarian aid. Signing these agreements is a violation of US sanctions imposed on Syria.

On July 26, 2021, the work of the Syrian-Russian joint meeting to follow up on the work of the international conference on 'the return of Syrian refugees and IDPs' [began](#) at the Conferences Palace in Damascus, with the event lasting for three days in the presence of a large Russian delegation. The final statement of [the meeting stipulated several points](#), including an assertion by the Syrian and Russian sides that: "the return of the displaced Syrians is a national priority for the Syrian state" and that "the necessity of reconstruction and liquidation of terrorist hotbeds and remnants in parallel with the efforts made by the Syrian state to secure what is needed for the returning Syrian displaced."

On August 15, 2021, the Syrian regime's president, Bashar al Assad, issued [the Child Rights Law](#); we at SNHR confirm that the Syrian regime is responsible for killing at least 22,930 children, including 174 due to torture inside its detention centers (between March 2011 and November 2021), while 3,621 children are still detained or forcibly disappeared in the Syrian regime detention centers.

On September 15, 2021, Martin Griffiths, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said [in a briefing](#) to the Security Council that, "An estimated 13.4 million people across Syria require humanitarian assistance; a 21 per cent increase compared to the year before and the highest since 2017"; he commented, "The lived reality is even more dire than figures can describe."

On October 15, 2021, the Interpol [website](#) published a statement in which it announced that in October it had lifted corrective measures from the National Central Bureau (NCB) in Damascus regarding the Syrian regime's use of the INTERPOL Information System in implementation of the decision taken by the Executive Committee in June 2021, after additional training for the NCB Damascus staff.

Between October 18 and 22, 2021, the sixth round of the meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee was held in Geneva, within the framework of finding a political solution to the situation in Syria in accordance with UN Resolution [2254](#), under the supervision of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen. The round did not make any progress and the two parties did not agree on a date for the next round. "A consensus on how to move forward was not achieved," Mr. Pedersen said during a [press conference](#) at the end of the sixth round, during which the Syrian regime committed the Ariha massacre, which was not condemned by the delegations participating in the round or by the UN envoy, or even referred to during his briefing at the Security Council.

On October 25, [the official website](#) of the Syrian regime's Presidency of the Council of Ministers announced the launch of a project to strengthen the capacity of local communities in Eastern Ghouta to confront climate changes and water shortages through integrated management of natural resources and immediate adaptation interventions in cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization. We note that this was not the first time that the Syrian regime has received support from United Nations bodies, which enables it to obtain material support despite the economic sanctions imposed on it. The Syrian Network for Human Rights condemns this cooperation with a regime involved in committing atrocious violations of human rights, which is considered participation, support and encouragement for continuing them.

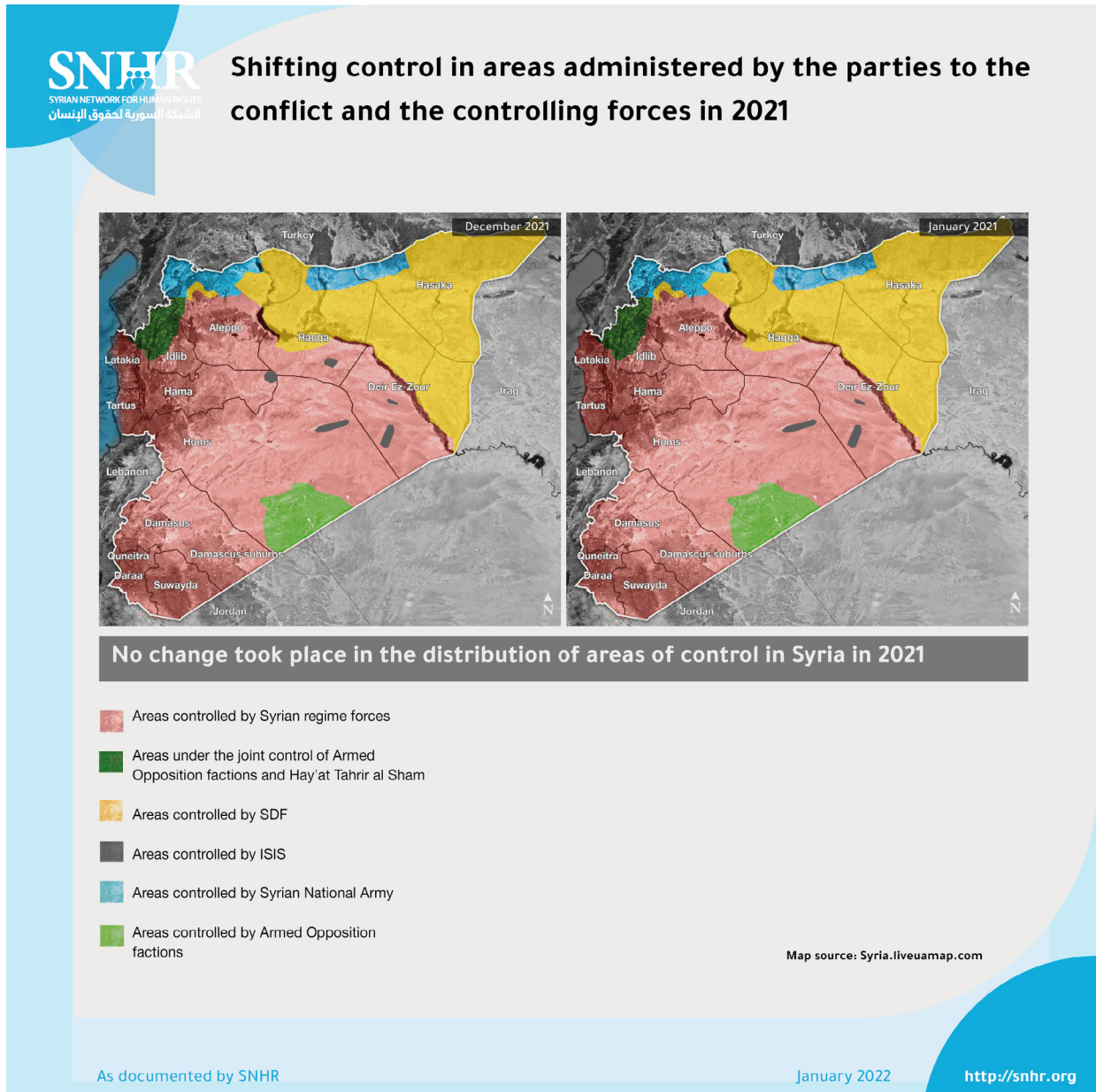
On December 9, 2021, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) announced in [a statement](#) that the organization, with the approval of all its members, had chosen Syria to head the organization's Council of Ministers next year. The statement added that the Arab Energy Conference in 2024 will be held in Damascus.

On December 21 and 22, 2021, [the 17th round of the Astana talks](#) was held in the Kazakh capital, Nur-Sultan, with the participation of representatives of the guarantor countries (Turkey, Russia, and Iran), Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, a delegation from the Syrian regime and a delegation from the Syrian opposition, in addition to delegations from Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, and representatives of international organizations. [At the end of this round](#), no new decisions were made.

On December 22, 2021, Alexander Lavrentiev, the Russian special envoy to Syria, [said](#) in an interview with Syria TV during the 17th round of the Astana talks conference, "The number of detainees in Syria, which is 980,000, cannot be reasonable given the number of prisons in Syria." We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights believe that this statement aims to undermine the credibility of reporting on the issue of detainees and persons forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime, and we issued a [report](#) that outlined the record of the documented enforced disappearance cases by SNHR and confirmed that these represent only the bare minimum number of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances that we were able to document according to the exacting, officially approved standards.

B. The military developments:

The pace of military operations decreased in 2021 compared to previous years, with these operations being severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the ceasefire agreement in the Idlib region that came into effect on March 6, 2020, with attacks being mainly limited to ground attacks, without making any significant advance on the ground. We note that no change in areas of control occurred in 2021. The map below, prepared by SNHR's Design Team based on the livemap website, shows the change in the reality of control of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in 2021:



which is under the control of Syrian regime forces, with the SDF's checkpoints completely surrounding the security zone, cutting off passage to and from the security square for Syrian regime forces personnel. The SDF siege, which lasted until February 2, 2021, was accompanied by intermittent clashes with light and heavy weapons between both parties.

On March 21, 2021, the Russian-Syrian alliance forces escalated their operations in northwestern Syria, the most prominent of which was artillery shelling carried out by artillery forces stationed at a site controlled by the Lebanese Hezbollah militias with Krasnopol shells targeting al Atareb Hospital in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The Russian warplanes also launched airstrikes on vital facilities on the Sarmada-Bab al Hawa Road in the northern Idlib governorate, which resulted in casualties and caused material damage. [We issued a special report](#) on these attacks.

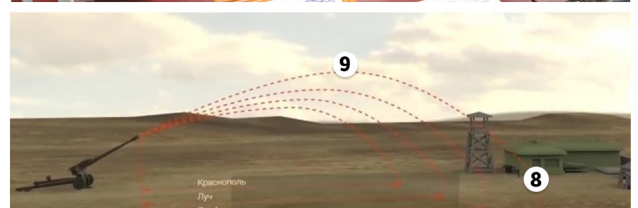
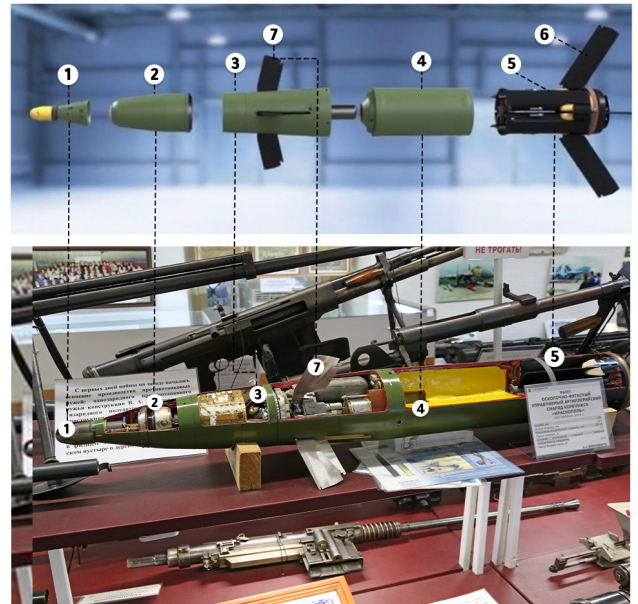
On April 20, 2021, clashes using light and medium weapons broke out between Syrian Democratic Forces and Syrian regime forces, in al Wehda Street in al Qameshli city, which extended to the Tai neighborhood, which is under the control of Syrian regime forces. On April 25, the clashes ceased as a result of Russian mediation, with Syrian Democratic Forces imposing their control over the entire Tai neighborhood. These clashes resulted in the deaths of three civilians, including a child, and the injury of more than 20 other civilians who sustained moderate wounds, in addition to causing the displacement of dozens of families.

On April 30, 2021, an armed group whose affiliation we have so far been unable to identify, attacked a Syrian regime military checkpoint, namely al Omari Checkpoint, located at the entrance to Tal Kroum military hill, north of Um Batna village in the suburbs of Quneitra, and killed the personnel present there; regime forces responded by shelling Um Batna village with several mortar shells fired by the artillery brigade stationed in Tal al Sha'ar on the suburbs of Quneitra. This shelling continued for several hours, as a result of which the village witnessed the displacement of hundreds of civilians who fled to the nearby villages of al Khaldiya, Mamtana Nabea al Sakhr, for fear of Syrian regime forces storming the town.

On June 5, 2021, the Jabal al Zaweya area, south of Idlib city, witnessed the beginning of a military escalation campaign by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces that continued until the end of August, in which the Russian forces extensively used the Russian-made Krasnopol laser circuit-guide munitions, which are characterized by their precise strikes.



A shell equipped with the Krasnopol laser guidance system used by Russian forces in Syria



- 1 Detonator to ignite the explosive charge
- 2 Laser designator
- 3 Guidance system consisting of a group of electrical circuits and capacitors with the aim of guiding the shell toward a laser light spot
- 4 TNT explosive charge
- 5 Compartment containing propellant with a jet at the rear end contributes to guiding the shell towards the target
- 6 Front wings that contribute to guiding the shell towards the target
- 7 Back wings whose purpose is to preserve the stability of the shell on its axis of orientation
- 8 Arc path of a shell equipped with the Krasnopol laser guidance system
- 9 Track peak

On July 27, 2021, the Syrian regime army's Fourth and Ninth divisions stormed al Shayyah area in the southern plains of the Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city and the Gharz area in the eastern part of the city, while regime forces brought reinforcements provided with armored vehicles to the outskirts of Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood and the camps in the city of Daraa. Syrian regime forces escalated their operations after meeting with resistance from fighters in the area, and bombarded several areas in the governorate, resulting in casualties and material damage. The Syrian regime forces also continued their military campaign against the Daraa al Balad area, and the Tareeq al Sadd and Camps neighborhoods in Daraa city, in addition to bombarding cities and towns in the western suburbs of Daraa, including Tafas city, the towns of al Yadouda, al Mzayreeb, and al Ajami village. The neighborhoods of Daraa city saw several attempted advances by Syrian regime forces, which were challenged by the local fighters.

On August 23, the Syrian regime escalated the pace of its attacks, and we documented its use of home-made 'Elephant' and Golan-type missiles, which are modified missiles using a large warhead, known for their great destructive capacity and lack of accuracy in hitting the target.

On August 31, 2021, the Russian warplanes launched raids on the military headquarters of the Sham Legion faction (Failaq al Sham) affiliated with the National Liberation Front in al Iskan area, west of al Ghazawiya area in Afrin suburbs, the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, within the areas under the control of Syrian National Army; this was the first time that the Russian air force launched an attack on that area since Russia's military intervention in September 2015.

On October 11, 2021, the Russian Air Force also carried out an airstrike on the outskirts of Marea city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo, which is under the control of Syrian National Army forces, the first such attack on the area in years, causing material damage.

On November 22, 2021, Russian warplanes fired missiles at Talita village in the predominantly Kurdish Jabal al Summaq area in the western suburbs of Idlib, for the first time since September 2019, resulting in civilian casualties.

C. On the human rights issue:

On January 21, 2021, UN Secretary-General [António Guterres announced](#) in a statement the establishment of a Senior Advisory Panel to strengthen the mechanism by which humanitarian workers and sites are better protected from attacks in Syria.

On February 18, 2021, [the Independent International Commission of Inquiry](#) on the Syrian Arab Republic issued its thirty third report on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria, which emphasized the displacement of more than half of Syria's population internally or externally during these years and the reduction of dozens of cities to rubble by relentless bombardment.

On February 19, 2021, [UN Watch](#)³⁶ said that the United Nations would appoint Bassam al Sabbagh, the Syrian regime's new envoy to the United Nations, to a high position in the "Committee on Decolonization", which is in charge of upholding fundamental human rights in opposing the "subjugation, domination and exploitation" of peoples. The Syrian Network for Human Rights expresses its condemnation of giving the Syrian regime this position despite its involvement in crimes against humanity against the Syrian people.

On March 1, 2021, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) released [a report](#) entitled "Disappearance and detention to suppress dissent a hallmark of a decade of conflict in Syria" based on over 2,500 interviews conducted over 10 years and investigations into more than 100 specific detention facilities. Commissioner Karen Koning AbuZayd explained, "The wealth of evidence collected over a decade is staggering, yet the parties to the conflict, with very few exceptions, have failed to investigate their own forces." adding, "The focus appears to be on concealing, rather than investigating crimes committed in the detention facilities."

On March 24, 2021, at its 46th session, the Human Rights Council [announced](#) the extension of the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry in the Syrian Arab Republic for a year.

On April 2, 2021, Russian human rights organizations, including the Memorial Human Rights Center (HRC) and the Civic Assistance Committee, a lawyer of Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg the human rights group; and Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM), during a press conference on the Zoom platform, [launched](#) a report, the first of its kind in Russia, entitled "[A Devastating Decade.](#)" The report, which came in nearly 200 pages, referred to violations of human rights and humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict, mainly violations by the Syrian regime and the broad Russian regime's support for it.

On April 4, 2021, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in a [statement](#) issued on the International Day for Mine Awareness that the Syrian conflict has left an estimated 11.5 million people living with the risk of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), and that children make up over 25% of these victims.

³⁶UN Watch is an independent non-governmental human rights organization based in Geneva.

On April 8, 2021, Human Rights Watch [stated](#) that the Syrian regime authorities are unlawfully confiscating the homes and lands of Syrians who fled Syrian-Russian military attacks in Idlib and Hama governorates.

On April 12, 2021, [the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#) Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) issued its second report which confirmed the responsibility of the Syrian regime for the Saraqeb attack, on February 4, 2018; the most prominent feature of this latter report was the identification of the Syrian regime's 'Tiger Forces' as bearing responsibility for leading the chemical attack. The report concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that at approximately 21:22 on February 4, 2018, a military helicopter from the Syrian regime's Air Force, under the control of the 'Tiger Forces', dropped at least one cylinder on eastern Saraqeb city in Idlib suburbs. This cylinder ruptured and released a toxic gas, chlorine, which dispersed over a large area affecting 12 named individuals. We issued a statement on this report.

On April 21, 2021, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons adopted Decision [C-25/DEC.9, under](#) which it suspended some of the rights and privileges of Syria as a member state of the OPCW. This came as part of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). France³⁷ submitted the draft decision on behalf of the 46 member states of the CWC. The decision obtained a majority of two-thirds of the votes of the present and voting states, with 87 states voting in favor of the decision, while 15 voted against it³⁸. We at the SNHR issued [a report](#) on April 29 that addressed the two decisions of the OPCW issued on Syria.

On July 13, 2021, the Human Rights Council, during its Forty-Seventh session, adopted a [resolution](#) on the human rights situation in Syria, in which it condemned the continued practice of enforced disappearance, and strongly condemned all human rights violations and abuses committed during detention, as well as expressed concern about the fate of thousands of forcibly disappeared, and stressed on the need to make progress in the political process in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

On July 29, 2021, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, [António Guterres](#), said in a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council attached to the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Program' covering the period from June 24 to July 23, 2021: "It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieving this urgent obligation."

³⁷ OPCW, the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties, paragraph 9 (17).
<https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/c2505%28e%29.pdf>

³⁸ OPCW, the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties, paragraph 9 (24).
<https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/c2505%28e%29.pdf>

On September 14, 2021, the report issued by [the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria \(COI\)](#) warned of the continuation of violations in Syria, and accused Syrian regime forces of launching attacks on northwest Syria, referring specifically to the bombing of the al Atareb Hospital, the bombing of the Jabal al Zaweya area and the displacement of thousands of its people. The report also stressed the continuation of arbitrary arrests, and cited cases of killing under torture and enforced disappearance by the Syrian regime, in addition to speaking about the Syrian regime's looting of housing and property, and mentioning the looting of lands through public auctions, as well as the regime forces' continuing looting of property under the pretext of supposedly fighting terrorism. The report also referred to the Syrian regime's obstruction of humanitarian aid delivery, and other egregious violations, as well as talking about the violations practiced by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, the Syrian National Army and Syrian Democratic Forces, and stressed that Syria is not safe for the return of refugees, and it is not safe for IDPs.

On September 15, 2021, [the International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition \(IC-BL-CMC\)](#) released its twelfth annual report on monitoring the use of cluster weapons worldwide, which concluded that Syria is the only country in the world to have experienced continued use of these weapons since 2012, revealing that the highest number of casualties documented to date in Syria was seen in 2020; the report confirmed that Syria is an unsafe country for its residents, and a fortiori is not a safe place for the return of refugees or IDPs. The report explains that the Syrian regime is by far the main party responsible for using cluster munitions.

On September 24, 2021, the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Ms. Michelle Bachet, announced that 350,209 people have been identified killed in the conflict in Syria between March 2011 to March 2021, including 26,727 women and 27,126 children, noting that the largest number of killings was recorded in Aleppo governorate, followed by Damascus Suburbs, Homs, Idlib, then Hama. This was in an oral update delivered to the Human Rights Council during the meetings of the forty-eighth session of the Council in Geneva.

On October 8, 2021, the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#), during its Forty-Eighth regular session, issued a resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria, in which it welcomed the efforts made by states to investigate what is happening in the Syrian Arab Republic and to prosecute those responsible for the crimes committed there. It also confirmed that Syria is still not safe for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and condemned the continued military operations of Syrian regime forces in Daraa and Idlib.

On October 20, 2021, Human Rights Watch issued a report entitled "[Our Lives Are Like Death](#)", which included testimonies from refugees who had returned to Syria from Jordan and Lebanon, and were subjected to grave violations, including killing, enforced disappearance, torture, and sexual violence.

On November 10, 2021, the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor published its [annual report](#), which showed a 20 percent increase in the number of victims killed globally by these weapons over the total number of victims recorded in 2019 for the past year. Syria accounted for the largest number of victims documented in the report, all of whom died due to the remnants of these weapons.

On November 10, 2021, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) issued a resolution in which it referred to the recommendation to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria to establish an independent mechanism with an international mandate to coordinate and consolidate claims regarding missing persons, including persons subjected to enforced disappearance, and requested that the UN Secretary-General conduct a study on how to bolster efforts, including those made through existing measures and mechanisms, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic, identify human remains and provide support to their families, in consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and based on the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. The Syrian Network for Human Rights supports the demands of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and victims of enforced disappearance, that there be a mechanism whose mission is exclusively concerned with the forcibly disappeared in Syria.

On November 10, 2021, [Physicians for Human Rights](#) issued a report documenting the violations of the Syrian regime against medical personnel in 2011 and 2012. The report noted that the Syrian regime targeted medical personnel who helped the demonstrators more than it targeted medical personnel on a political basis, with the report recording 1,644 arbitrary detentions of this nature.

On November 12, 2021, the United Nations' [World Food Program](#) warned that levels of food insecurity in Syria are currently at their worst level, stating, "12.4 million people are now food insecure and do not know where their next meal will come from. This is a 57 percent increase since 2019 and the highest number ever recorded in the history of Syria."

On November 29, 2021, Fernando Arias, Director-General of [the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) (OPCW), said in his opening statement to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Organization's Member States in Geneva, that the Syrian regime is still not in compliance with the Convention on the Disarmament of Chemical Weapons. He added that Damascus has not yet completed any of the relevant procedures, further noting that the Syrian regime continued to refuse to grant entry visas to an OPCW's arms inspector, hindering the work of the organization and its ongoing investigations.

On November 30, 2021, Amnesty International issued a [report](#) in which it said that at least 27,000 children are being held in dire conditions in al Hawl Camp, where they are arbitrarily deprived of their liberty. The organization called on the Self-Management forces that control the camp to establish a clear mechanism to return Syrian children, their mothers and their caregivers to their home areas.

On November 30, 2021, the [European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\)](#) released its report on "[Common Analysis and Guidance Notes in Syria](#)." The report is intended as a tool for policymakers and decision-makers in the context of the [Common European Asylum System](#) (CEAS). It aims to assist in the examination of applications for international protection by applicants from Syria, and to foster convergence in decision practices across EU Member States. It mainly covers the period between January 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021.

D. The most prominent investigative reporting into the reality of violations in Syria:

On September 19, 2021, [the Washington Post](#) reported that more than 70 people have been killed by ISIS militants in al Hawl Camp, adding that despite the security operations launched by Syrian Democratic Forces in al Hawl Camp in search of ISIS cells, this did not make a difference on the ground, with ISIS continuing to carry out killings against anyone who opposes its ideas.

In early January 2021, the [US Carter](#) Center for Research published a report entitled "[A Path to Conflict Transformation in Syria](#) - A Framework for a Phased Approach," in which it talked about seven urgent negotiating paths to get out of the current situation in Syria. The first is political reform according to Security Council Resolution 2254, which calls for a political process in Syria, the drafting of a new constitution, and the organization of free and fair elections supervised by the United Nations.

On February 10, 2021, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy published a [study](#) that stated that the Syrian regime currently controls about 15% of the land borders with neighboring countries, while Hezbollah and Shiite militias control 20% of the borders.

On February 23, 2021, [the New York Times](#) published an article about the meeting between the Syrian regime's president and some pro-Syrian regime journalists in January 2021, without it being announced in advance. The newspaper reported that when the Syrian regime's president was asked about the economic collapse in Syria, he replied, "I know", but he offered no concrete steps to stem the crisis beyond suggesting that TV cookery shows be cancelled, saying: "[Television channels should cancel cooking shows so as not to taunt Syrians with images of unattainable food.](#)" We note that this wasn't the first time that the Syrian regime has dealt with critical issues in such a callous, indifferent and irresponsible manner.

On March 4, 2021, democracy watchdog organization Freedom House [released](#) its annual ranking of the world's most free and most oppressed nations in 2020; and according to this classification, Syria was among the worst oppressed nations for their peoples.

On March 4, 2021, [a joint report](#) by the World Vision and Frontier Economics to develop economic findings, estimated the economic cost of the conflict in Syria, after 10 years, to stand at about \$ 1.2 trillion. The report showed that 4.8 million Syrian children were born during the past ten years, who have only ever known war.

On April 7, 2021, the Arab Reform Initiative issued a [survey](#) on the environmental impacts of Syria's conflict, in which it stated, "A decade of war has left a significant environmental impact as a result of the high usage of explosive weapons, the damage done to oil refineries (with soil contamination, pollution, and the subsequent reliance on highly polluting makeshift oil refineries), and the mismanagement of waste and water, especially in densely populated areas."

On May 24, 2021, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project ([OCCRP](#)) published a report in which it said that in 2012 the Syrian regime imposed a tax to finance 'reconstruction' on citizens and formed a committee to contribute to the reconstruction. The committee has raised an estimated 386 billion Syrian pounds, according to an analysis by the OCCRP and other partners, which was not spent on helping civilians, and there is evidence that most of these funds were allocated to ministries and government institutions, where they went towards paying for military facilities and housing for individuals in Syrian regime forces.

On June 8, 2021, [the Economist newspaper](#) published [the Global Liveability Index 2021](#), in which Damascus was ranked as the least liveable city in the world, ranking 140th.

On July 4, 2021, [the Swiss newspaper SonntagsZeitung revealed](#) that Germany had exported chemicals to Syria in 2014, that may have been used in the production of chemical weapons. The newspaper pointed out that the German group Brenntag supplied a shipment of isopropanol and Diethylamine to the Mediterranean Pharmaceutical Industries company in Syria, with these being essential ingredients in the production of the sarin chemical warfare agent. It was noted that the pharmaceutical company received 20% of the sent shipment, which means that it is likely that the rest of the shipment was used by the Syrian regime in the production of chemical weapons.

On October 20, 2021, an investigation conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies ([CSIS](#)), the Operations and Policy Center, and the Center for Operational Analysis and Research confirmed that the Central Bank of Syria, which is subject to sanctions by the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Union, had obtained \$60 million in 2020 by manipulating the Syrian currency, with the central bank forcing UN agencies to use a lower exchange rate, making UN contracts one of the main ways for the Syrian regime to make money.

On November 13, 2021, an [investigation](#) by the New York Times, revealed that the warplanes of the US-led coalition against ISIS targeted a gathering of civilians in al Baghouz town on March 18, 2019, killing 70 people, according to the initial assessment of the damages of the attack. Following this investigation, the US Department of Defense [announced](#) on its official website on November 29 that the commander of the US Army Command had been assigned to conduct a review of the investigation within a period of 90 days.

On November 22, 2021, the Guardian published a [press investigation](#) about the Syrian Democratic Forces' release of imprisoned ISIS fighters in exchange for money under a "reconciliation" scheme which stipulates that they will not join any terrorist organizations and not return to the northeastern region of Syria, according to official documents and interviews conducted by the newspaper with prisoners released from detention centers belonging to the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Syrian Democratic Forces' media office issued two statements on November [22](#) and [24](#) denying what was stated in the investigation.

On November 29, the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy published an [investigation](#) proving the involvement of the SOS Chrétiens d'Orient (SOSCO, or SOS), an official partner of the French Defense Ministry, in providing material support to pro-Assad militias accused of committing war crimes, violating French laws and regulations regarding anti-terrorism, anti-corruption, and complicity in war crimes.

VII. Slow Progress in the Accountability Process:

Nearly eleven years have passed since the outbreak of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria, with the entire period blighted by the perpetration of grave human rights violations amounting to war crimes. Meanwhile, the steps taken in the accountability process remain far less than the desired limits and are incapable of deterring the perpetrators of these violations from committing further crimes or holding them accountable; universal jurisdiction is the only option left in the framework of criminal accountability after the failure to refer the Syrian file to the International Criminal Court as a result of the Russian-Chinese support for the Syrian regime, and the UN Security Council's failure to establish a criminal court for Syria. The year 2021 witnessed many steps in the field of complaints and cases filed against the perpetrators of violations in Syria, which do not live up to the hopes of the Syrian people. We hope that 2022 will be better than the previous year in this regard. We stress our full support for the path of universal jurisdiction since 2013, in keeping with our motto, **"No Justice without Accountability."**

The most prominent events that we monitored in the course of accountability in the past year:

On January 1, 2021, following its exit from the European Union, the United Kingdom [announced](#) its commitment to holding accountable those responsible for crimes in Syria and transferring the European Union sanctions applied against the Syrian regime and its partners to the special UK sanctions regime.

On January 15, 2021, [the European Union added](#) Faisal al Miqdad, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the list of people subject to the European Union's restrictive measures on Syria, bringing the number of people targeted by the travel ban and asset freeze to 289, in addition to 70 entities subject to an asset freeze.

On January 18, 2021, [the Federal Prosecutor's Office in Karlsruhe, Germany, announced](#) that it had filed a lawsuit against two men before the High Regional Court in Düsseldorf in mid-December 2020, suspected of participating in an execution by Syrian regime forces in 2012.

On January 28, 2021, [the Federal Supreme Court in Germany issued](#) an important decision at the level of universal jurisdiction to prosecute criminals against humanity and war criminals, to remove the immunity of any officer or official who enjoys immunity in his country and who has committed war crimes or crimes against humanity.

On February 5, 2021, Stef Blok, the Netherlands' Minister for Foreign Affairs, [announced](#) that the country's Cabinet had approved an investigation into the Dutch government's provision of material aid to 22 armed groups in Syria between 2015 and 2018.

On February 22, 2021, the Supreme Court in Düsseldorf, Germany, [announced](#) that the Public Prosecutor had filed a lawsuit against two Syrian men on suspicion of their participation in the execution of an officer in the Syrian opposition factions in 2012, and that their trial will begin on March 4, with the two men being arrested in July 2020.

On March 4, 2021, Marc Garneau, [Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, announced](#) that his country had requested formal negotiations, under the United Nations Convention against Torture, to hold the Syrian regime accountable for the countless human rights violations it has inflicted on the Syrian people since 2011. On March 12, a joint statement was issued by the Canadian and Dutch governments, in which they announced the cooperation of the two countries in holding the Syrian regime accountable for grave violations of international law, including torture under the Convention against Torture. The Netherlands had taken similar steps in September of the previous year, 2020. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights support this step and welcome further similar steps by other countries in regard to agreements that the Syrian regime has ratified and subsequently violated in a heinous manner, for which it must be held accountable.

Meanwhile, on March 12, [the Dutch government announced](#), through its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok, that the Syrian regime is willing to engage in dialogue with the Netherlands about the latter's decision to hold Syria to account for gross human rights violations he committed in Syria. The government expressed its desire for Canada to hold talks with Syria. The statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs affirmed that if the talks fail to lead to justice for the victims, the Netherlands and Canada will not hesitate to take the matter to an international court.

On March 13, 2021, the Guernica 37 International Justice Chambers in the UK announced in a press release that it had submitted two confidential filings with the War Crimes Unit of the UK Metropolitan Police Service Counter-Terrorism Command (SO15) to open an investigation into [Asma al Assad](#), a dual British-Syrian national, looking into allegations of incitement and encouragement to commit acts of terrorism in the Syrian Arab Republic. The statement called for prosecuting her rather than merely stripping her of her citizenship.

On March 15, 2021, the United Kingdom announced a [new round of sanctions](#) against the Syrian regime, including travel bans and asset freezes for six senior figures of the Syrian regime, namely Faisal al Miqdad, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Luna al Shibl, advisor to the president of the Syrian regime; Yasser Ibrahim, a prominent businessman who finances the Syrian regime; Muhammad Baraa al Qatirji, a prominent businessman operating across multiple sectors of Syria's economy, most notably the trade in petroleum products; Major General Malik Alia, Commander of the Republican Guard, and Major General Zaid Salah, Commander of the Syrian Army's Fifth Corps.

On March 15, 2021, the family of a man who was tortured and beheaded by members of the [Russian Wagner](#) Group's forces in Syria, with the support of three human rights organizations (the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, the International Federation for Human Rights, and the Russian

Human Rights Centre MEMORIAL), filed a lawsuit [before the Russian judiciary](#), the first of its kind, to hold the suspects accountable for torturing and killing the victim.

On April 21, 2021, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons adopted Decision [C-25/DEC.9](#), under which it suspended some of the rights and privileges of Syria as a member state of the OPCW. This came as part of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

On May 27, 2021, the [Council of the European Union](#) extended EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for one additional year, until June 1, 2022. We note that these sanctions have been imposed since 2011 in response to the Syrian regime's violent repression of the civilian population, with the current sanctions list includes 283 individuals (after de-listing five of those originally declared dead) and 70 entities targeted by asset freezes and travel bans.

On July 28, 2021, the [US Department](#) of the Treasury, for the first time since US President Biden took office, imposed sanctions on eight individuals and 10 entities in Syria, including the Seydnaya Military Prison and al Khatib Branch.

On July 28, 2021, the website of the Office of the German Federal Public Prosecutor published the indictment of the Syrian doctor Alaa. M, which was addressed by the German Public Prosecutor in the city of Frankfurt to the Supreme Court in Frankfurt, on July 15, which includes accusations of crimes against humanity and causing serious bodily injuries against detainees held by the Syrian regime. We note that the accused arrived in mid-2015 in Germany, where he worked as a doctor, and was arrested in June 2020 based on [reports of him violating](#) human rights and is still in pretrial detention.

On October 2, 2021, the [US Department of Justice](#) published a statement announcing the initiation of a lawsuit against the Canadian citizen born in Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Khalifa, known as Abu Radwan al Kanadi, in the US state of Virginia, on charges of affiliation with ISIS. The statement indicated that Muhammad had held important positions in ISIS since 2013 and continued until his arrest by Syrian Democratic Forces in January 2019.

On October 11, 2021, the European Union announced, in [a statement](#), a decision to extend sanctions and restrictive measures against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons for an additional year, until 16 October 2022, which target individuals and entities directly responsible for the development and use of chemical weapons, as well as those providing financial, technical or material support. The [list](#) of these sanctions included 15 persons, including five Syrians, and most of the ten others of Russian nationality, in addition to two Syrian and Russian entities. The sanctions include a ban on travel to the EU, an asset freeze for individuals, and an asset freeze for entities.

On October 19, 2021, [the German Federal Court](#) in the city of Karlsruhe upheld a life imprisonment sentence against a person involved in the massacre at the landfill in Tabqa city, eastern Syria, in 2013, in which a number of members of the Syrian regime's police, army and security forces were killed after being captured when Jabhat al Nusra seized control over Raqqa city. The court also upheld varying prison sentences against three people who fought in the ranks of the al Nusra Front. According to the [DW](#) website, the defendants arrived in Europe and recently lived in various German cities.

On October 26, 2021, the Odense Court in Denmark began hearings regarding a case against a Danish company for violating the sanctions imposed by the European Union on the Syrian regime. According to [Reuters](#), the Dan-Bunkering Company sold about 172,000 tons of kerosene jet fuel between 2015 and 2017 to two Russian companies that handed it over to the Syrian regime at Banyas port in Latakia.

On October 28, 2021, the Public Prosecution Office in the German city of Hamburg published a statement in which it said that the Public Prosecutor's Office in Hamburg had filed charges against a 27-year-old Syrian citizen, on charges of belonging to the Ahrar al Sham faction and participating in the siege of villages with a majority-Shiite population, as well as appearing in a propaganda video for Ahrar al Sham filmed in an area controlled by the faction. The statement indicated that the defendant had left Syria in January 2016 to travel to Germany.

On November 1, 2021, [Reporters Without Borders \(RSF\)](#) announced in a statement the start of the sessions of the "People's Court", led by Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Reporters Without Borders on November 2. The statement described this trial as providing a form of achieving popular justice to hold the regimes and governments responsible for the killing of journalists accountable; the court relies on investigations and accurate legal analysis, which includes specific cases in three countries, including Syria. The indictment included accusations against the governments of Sri Lanka, Mexico and Syria for their failure to achieve justice for the murders of Lasantha Wickrematunge, Miguel Ángel López Velasco and Nabil al Shurbaji, the last of whom died under torture in the Syrian regime's Seydnaya Prison in 2015.

On November 10, 2021, the Higher Regional Court in Frankfurt, Germany, announced in a [statement](#) that of the majority of the charges contained in the indictment against Dr. Alaa M. had been accepted, with most of these falling into the category of crimes against humanity. The charges that were accepted included torturing prisoners of the opposition against the Syrian regime in Homs city in Syria in 2011 and 2012 in the military hospital and in the Military Intelligence prison, in addition to a charge of premeditated murder of one of the detainees.

On November 15, 2021, the official website of the European Union Council published a [statement](#) on the Council's decision to add four recently appointed ministers in the Syrian regime's government to the list of sanctions imposed by the Council on 287 individuals and 70 entities in relation to the violations

committed by the Syrian regime in Syria. [The sanctions, which target](#) Boutros al Hallaq, the Minister of Information, Amr Salem, the Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, Muhammad Seif al Din, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, and Diala Barakat, the Minister of State, include asset freezes and a travel ban.

On November 27, 2021, the [DW](#) website reported that the court of the German city of Dusseldorf had sentenced a German citizen, who was working as a guard in an ISIS prison in Manbej city in the Aleppo suburbs, to ten years in prison for premeditated murder for his participation in torturing a prisoner, leading to his death.

On December 2, 2021, the Council of the European Union issued a [decision](#) imposing restrictive measures on 17 individuals and 11 entities responsible for the refugee crisis at the Belarusian border. Among these entities was the Syrian Cham Wings Airlines which was included for its complicity in the aforementioned refugee crisis, with the company participating in the activities of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus that facilitate refugees' illegal transit to European Union countries.

On December 7, 2021, the [US Department of the Treasury](#) issued a decision imposing sanctions on some persons responsible or complicit in human rights violations in Syria, and on entities owned or controlled by these persons, including officers in the forces and security services of the Syrian regime. Those subjected to sanctions included Major General Tawfiq Khaddour for his connection to a chemical attack on Eastern Ghouta in April 2018, Major General Muhammad Hasouri for personally carrying out air attacks, some of them chemical, on Syrian civilians, Adib Salameh, assistant director of the Syrian regime's Air Intelligence division for being an integral part of the regime's repressive security apparatus, and Qahtan Khalil, the head of the security committee in southern Syria, as well as Kamal al Hasan, the commander of Branch 227 responsible for joint operations with Hezbollah in Syria. The Syrian Network for Human Rights has provided the US Department of State with lists of individuals who committed human rights violations in Syria, including those who were added to the latest sanctions list.

On December 26, 2021, [France 24](#) TV website quoted another French news agency as stating that French authorities had charged a Frenchman of Syrian origin with "[complicity in crimes against humanity and war crimes](#)," following his arrest on suspicion of providing the Syrian regime with ingredients to manufacture chemical weapons used in Syria, through a shipping company owned by him; the accused was placed in pretrial detention.

The role of the Syrian Network for Human Rights in supporting the accountability process in 2021:

The main objective of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) in documenting human rights violations in Syria is to preserve the rights of all victims, to hold criminals accountable in order to achieve justice, to support the transitional justice process and to commemorate, as well as to contribute to political and social advocacy processes. The Syrian Network for Human Rights intensified its efforts in 2021 within the accountability process, and [the most prominent of what SNHR has done are:](#)

Memorandum of Understanding with [Physicians for Human Rights \(PHR\)](#)

[Participation in establishing the War, Conflict and Health Global Alliance](#), along with more than 30 organizations from nations worldwide, to enhance coordination and cooperation in health and humanitarian action and support collective voices calling for an end to wars, mass violence and armed conflict, all of which pose major threats to health and health systems.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights has also been the most cited information source in many international human rights reports, most notably:

- [The European Asylum Support Office's \(EASO\) report](#) on military service in Syria, released in April 2021, whose purpose is to provide relevant information regarding military service in the Syrian regime's army for determining individuals' international protection status, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.
- [The twelfth annual report on monitoring the use of cluster weapons worldwide](#) released by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) in September 2021.
- [The twenty-third annual report on monitoring the use of landmines worldwide](#) released by ICBL-CMC in November 2021. We note that the Syrian Network for Human Rights is a member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC), and is its primary source of information on Syria.
- The report on the Common Analysis and Guidance Notes in Syria released by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in November 2021, which is intended as a tool for policymakers and decision-makers in the context of [the Common European Asylum System \(CEAS\)](#).
- [The report by Physicians for Human Rights](#) released in November 2021, entitled "[The Survivors, the Dead, and the Disappeared: Detention of Health Care Workers in Syria, 2011-2012](#)," which documented the Syrian regime's violations against medical personnel in 2011 and 2012. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights contributed to this through working in partnership with the organization, and sharing the data that we documented, which the report noted is the largest, most complete and best updated information source compared to other sources.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights has also been one of the most prominent sources of information in many reports issued by numerous nations' foreign ministries, and status reports from countries around the world, for example:

- [The European Parliament resolution on the Syrian conflict, issued on March 11, 2021](#), which condemned all atrocities and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and reminded the international community of the gravity and the magnitude of human rights violations in Syria perpetrated by different parties to the conflict, as well as emphasizing the Syrian regime's overwhelming responsibility for these violations.
- [The US Department of State's report on International Religious Freedom in Syria for 2020](#), released in March, which stressed that sectarian violence has continued across the country.
- [The US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's annual report for 2020](#) on the human rights situation for various countries worldwide.
- [The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs' report](#) on the general situation in Syria issued in June 2021.

In the context of its participation in the case against [Anwar Raslan](#), the Syrian Network for Human Rights confirmed [in a statement](#) issued on November 9, 2021, that the charge of enforced disappearance against the defendant A.R. in his ongoing court trial in Koblenz should be included. The statement noted that the Public Prosecutor had requested that the Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, Fadel Abdul Ghany, be summoned to speak in court about the data on the forcibly disappeared persons that have been documented

On July 14, 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights submitted [a report](#) to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as part of the contribution as "Other Stakeholders" to the documents for the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which will contribute to the summary presented by the OHCHR at the fortieth session, to be held in January and February 2022.

In 2021, the Syrian Network for Human Rights participated in international and UN events, and organized side events on the sidelines of international events. All of these efforts are in the context of advocacy and mobilization processes, that contribute to the process of accountability, with the most prominent of these being:

January 22, 2021: An event entitled "[Children of Syria - The Lost Hope](#)" to launch the Ninth Annual Report on Violations against Children in Syria since March 2011.

February 8, 2021: An event to launch the tenth annual report: The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2020, entitled "[The Bleeding Decade](#)".

March 25, 2021: An event marking the tenth anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria, with participants from a number of leading global nations, on the sidelines of the Brussels V Conference, entitled "[Syria: A Decade of Impunity and The Need for Accountability for Ongoing Human Rights Violations](#)".

June 11, 2021: The Syrian Network for Human Rights participated in the second day of The Airspace Tribunal hearings, organized by [the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights \(ECCHR\)](#) and supported by the University of Kent.

October 5, 2021: A High-level [Event](#) on the Sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly Meetings, entitled "[One Hundred Thousand, and Counting: Seeking Justice for Syria's Disappeared](#)"

October 22, 2021: An online event entitled '[Advancing the Cause of Detainees and Forcibly Disappeared Persons Is Our Collective Responsibility](#)' in cooperation with the founders of the Truth and Justice Charter.

[Nominating the Syrian child Muhammad Nour al Asmar](#) for the International Children's Peace Prize for the year 2021, with Muhammad's nomination announced accepted in October 2021, along with nominations for 162 other exceptional male and female children from around the world.

Because of the [SNHR's role](#) in the field of documentation and advocacy, the official website of the Syrian Network for Human Rights is constantly exposed to cyber-attacks. The severity and intensity of these attacks escalated in 2021, after the release of the sixth annual report on [violations by Russian forces in Syria](#) since Russia's military intervention on September 30, with these attacks progressing from efforts to simply obstruct browsing of the website to attempting to paralyze the site and completely stop it from working. According to the analysis of data provided by Cloudflare Security Services, the source of the vast majority of the attacks is Russia.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Legal conclusions:

- The Syrian regime has failed in its responsibility to protect its populations from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from crimes of atrocity, or itself is committing such crimes as in the case of the Syrian regime, means that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner³⁹.
- All parties to the conflict in Syria have violated both international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with the Syrian regime and its allies being the perpetrators of by far the largest number of violations.
- Syrian regime forces have perpetrated various violation that amount to crimes against humanity, ranging from extrajudicial killing to torture, forced displacement and others, with all these crimes being perpetrated in a systematic and widespread manner at the same time. In addition, Syrian regime forces have committed war crimes through indiscriminate bombardment, and the destruction of buildings and facilities. Not only did the Syrian regime's government breach international humanitarian law and customary law, but it also violated Security Council resolutions - particularly Resolution No. 2042 which is concerned with releasing detainees, and Resolution No. 2139 which is concerned with ceasing indiscriminate attacks and enforced disappearances. All of these issues have yet to be addressed with any form of accountability in light of the legitimacy conferred through Russian-Chinese protection and Western silence.
- The Syrian regime does not care about the political transition process because this would lead to a transition from dictatorship to democracy.
- Russian forces have violated Security Council Resolution No. 2139, as well as Resolution No. 2254, through indiscriminate bombardment. Additionally, Russian forces have violated many rules of international humanitarian law, committing dozens of violations that amount to war crimes through indiscriminate, disproportionate bombardment, particularly given the use of excessive power in these attacks, as well as violating Article 8 of the Rome Statute by committing intentional homicide, all of which constitute war crimes.
- Neither the Russian or Syrian authorities have conducted any serious investigations into these attacks, or even into any other previous ones, with the Russian and Syrian leaderships, both military and political, bearing responsibility for these attacks based on the principle of command responsibility under international humanitarian law⁴⁰, as they did not prevent the attacks and did not punish those responsible. Rather, the widespread repeated attacks indicate that they can only be the actions of a state policy ordered directly by the highest levels of the Russian and Syrian leadership, which implicates them in more crimes against humanity and war crimes, and emphasizes once again that sanctions must be imposed and maintained by various states of the world that target all those involved in these barbaric attacks.

³⁹ United Nations, General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome, para. 139. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

⁴⁰ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 152, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule152
ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 153, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule153

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated many basic rights, including the right to life. HTS has also practiced multiple other violations such as torture and enforced disappearance, as well as being responsible for numerous war crimes through indiscriminate shelling, looting, abduction, imposing restrictions on women, and restrictions on freedom of movement, and attempting to enforce an extremist religious ideology.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition and Syrian National Army forces have committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, foremost among which are torture, enforced disappearance, looting and theft of property, and ethnic discrimination.
- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have violated many basic rights, including the right to life. These forces carried out many other violations, including torture, enforced disappearance, displacement and forced conscription, as well as looting the region's natural resources, such as oil and gas, without issuing any financial transparency reports about their revenues and how these are spent. We fear that these funds are likely to be poured into supporting the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party, the leader of the Democratic Union Party.
- The member states of the US-led coalition have also failed during all the years of their presence in Syria, especially after the defeat of the ISIS terrorist group, to achieve political stability in northeast Syria, failing to enable democratic local elections through which power could be handed over to democratically elected local figures who are not affiliated with a particular ethnic or sectarian party.
- Employing remote bombing tactics to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva IV Convention⁴¹.
- A large proportion of Syrians were killed as a result of landmines, and none of the perpetrator forces in the Syrian conflict have revealed maps of the locations where landmines were planted. This indicates total indifference to the lives of civilians, and children in particular.
- The repercussions of the cumulative and continuous catastrophic violations over eleven years have caused and intensified the collapse of the Syrian state because the Syrian regime is embedded in it as a cancerous body and will not accept any political transition even if Syria turns into the most failed state in the world, leading to the fragmentation of Syrian society and the displacement of millions.

⁴¹CRC, Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949, arts. 27, 31, 32.

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=AE2D398352C5B028C12563CD002D6B5C&action=openDocument>

Recommendations:

UN Security Council and the United Nations:

- The Security Council should take additional steps following the adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly demands that all parties should, "...Immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment."
- Find ways and mechanisms to implement Security Council Resolutions 2041, 2042, 2139 and Article 12 of Resolution 2254 regarding detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in Syria.
- Take action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to protect detainees from certain death inside detention centers, and to put an end to the pandemic of enforced disappearance that continues to plague Syria, posing a threat to the security and stability of society, act to end torture and deaths due to torture inside Syrian regime detention centers, and save whoever is left among the detainees as quickly as possible.
- Disclose the fate of the nearly 102,000 persons forcibly disappeared in Syria, 85 percent of them by the Syrian regime.
- Following the failure of the parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to comply with any of the Security Council resolutions concerning the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs or enforced disappearance, the Security Council must, after 11 years, intervene militarily in order to protect Syrian civilians.
- Members of the Security Council must stop using their veto to protect the Syrian regime, which has committed hundreds of thousands of violations over the past ten years, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- There is a need to refer the Syrian issue from the Security Council to the United Nations General Assembly after 10 years of failure on the part of the Security Council to protect civilians or to help in ending the Syrian conflict.
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those implicated in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes should be held accountable.
- Seriously work to achieve a political transition under the Geneva Communiqué and Security Council Resolution No. 2254, to ensure the stability and territorial integrity of Syria, and the dignified and safe return of refugees and IDPs.
- Establish security and peace in Syria and implement the 'Responsibility to Protect' norm in order to preserve Syrians' lives, heritage, and cultural artifacts from being destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- Monitor the Iranian regime's claims of continuing to supply weapons, equipment and militias to the Syrian regime.
- Ensure the safety and security of millions of Syrian refugees, especially women and children, who have been displaced worldwide, and ensure their safety from arrest, torture or enforced disappearance if they choose to return to areas controlled by the Syrian regime.

- Request all relevant United Nations agencies to make greater efforts to provide humanitarian and food aid and medical assistance in areas where the fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons' camps, and follow-up with those states that have pledged the necessary contributions.
- Allocate a significant amount of money for clearing mines left over by the Syrian conflict from the United Nations Mine Action Service, particularly in areas prepared to carry out this task with transparency and integrity.

International Community:

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter incapability, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people and increase support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be applied 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 (ICR2P) in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were exhausted, with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana talks that followed proving equally fruitless. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the norm of the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The UN Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, or quickly establish a tribunal dedicated to trying crimes against humanity and war crimes to end the cycle of impunity that has now spanned a decade in Syria.
- Expand political and economic sanctions against the Russian regime for committing war crimes in Syria, for continuing to violate sanctions imposed against the Syrian regime, and for assisting it in breaching UN Security Council resolutions, including those regarding non-recurrence of using chemical weapons and barrel bombs.
- Put real pressure on Russia and Iran, and categorize them as key partners in the violations committed in Syria since they continue to supply the Syrian regime with weapons, as well as due to their direct involvement in thousands of violations against Syrian citizens.
- Provide protection and assistance to forcibly displaced women and children, including IDPs and refugees, and take into account their specific needs, primarily for protection.
- All countries worldwide must ratify the CEDAW Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and fulfill their obligations under these conventions to hold the Syrian regime accountable, expose the regime's criminal practices against Syria's women and children, and make every possible effort to mitigate and stop these.

- Fulfill the commitment of pledged financial contributions:
 - Assist neighboring countries and provide all possible support to increase the level of education and healthcare in these countries which host the largest number of female and child refugees.
 - Establish mechanisms to end the bombing of schools and kindergartens, protect these facilities, and work to create a safe learning environment, which is the least possible level of protection that could be offered for civilians.
- At a minimum, pressure must be applied on the Syrian regime to ensure that international observers, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, are given unconditional and unrestricted access to women and girls in detention centers.
- Support the political transition process and impose pressure to compel the parties to implement the political transition within a time period of no more than six months so that most of the violations end and millions of displaced people can safely and settled return to their homes.
- Stop any forcible return of Syrian refugees, since the situation in Syria continues to be unsafe, and put pressure to achieve a political transition that would ensure the automatic return of millions of refugees.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (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 considering that these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict.
- Train Syrian organizations to begin clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the lethal dangers of such munitions.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Launch extensive investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.
- Work on identifying the responsibility of individuals within the Syrian regime who are involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, publish their names to expose them to international public opinion and end all dealings with them at every political and economic level.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM):

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report, and provide an exchange of experiences with Syrian organizations working in the field of documentation, data collection and analysis.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

- Create a stable and safe environment for Syrian refugee children and intensify work for their reintegration into society through long-term psychological treatment.
- Increase investment in education and health.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and local and international humanitarian and relief organizations:

- Coordinate humanitarian aid operations according to the areas worst affected and reject attempts at pressure and blackmail by the Syrian regime which is working to harness aid to its advantage.
- Allocate adequate resources for the rehabilitation of child and female survivors, especially those who have been directly affected by violations, or subjected to violence, sexual exploitation and forced marriage, giving priority to the areas worst affected.

The United Nations Special Envoy to Syria:

- Condemn the perpetrators of these crimes, the massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the transitional governing body.
- Call for rapid implementation of democratic political change that restores victims' rights and embodies the principles of transitional justice.
- There is no sense in pursuing any political process in light of the continued bombing of hospitals and UN aid, and the pursuit of a zero-security-military solution by the Syrian regime and its allies, and the UN Envoy must acknowledge this.
- Clearly assign responsibility to the party responsible for the death of the political process, and disclose to the Syrian people the timing of the end of the political transition process.

Supporting States and European Union:

- Support the processes of documenting human rights violations in Syria that expose the Syrian regime's atrocious practices and their continuing nature, as well as the regime's violation of the principles of international law.
- Take further steps towards accelerating the completion of the political transition towards democracy and human rights.
- The situation in Syria is still in a critical state in terms of respecting basic rights, and any citizen may be subjected to arrest under these vague and overly broad laws. Therefore, we recommend that refugees not be returned until such a political transition is achieved, as there will be no stability and security in light of the survival of the current Syrian regime and the Counter-Terrorism Court.
- Economic sanctions imposed on the two main backers of the Syrian regime, namely Iran and Russia, must be intensified, which is something that can be effectively achieved by the European Union. While civilian protection and safe zones are still the primary demands, economic sanctions also remain an effective course of action.
- Provide every possible assistance to the active civil society groups working to rehabilitate and reintegrate female victims into their communities, and support the operations for the support and rehabilitation of female survivors in areas of displacement and asylum.

Neighboring countries:

- Ensure that refugees fleeing Syria are able to seek asylum, respect their rights, including the prohibition of refoulement, and expedite reunification. EU states and other countries should alleviate the burden on neighboring countries and receive more Syrian refugees, while donor countries should increase their assistance to the UNHCR and civil societies organizations in countries of asylum.

League of Arab States:

- Absolutely reject the return of the Syrian regime to the Arab League in light of its continued involvement up to the present date in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The Syrian regime

- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.
- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Repeal all barbaric laws and inflexible expressions included in these that can be interpreted without limits in order to arrest and torture any political opponent.
- Reveal the fate of nearly 87,000 forcibly disappeared persons, and immediately release tens of thousands of arbitrary detainees and detained persons whose sentences have ended.
- Return the property and money confiscated from detainees.
- Release prisoners of conscience unconditionally, reveal the fate of the disappeared among them, compensate those affected, and stop tampering with their fate and extorting their families.
- Stop treating the Syrian state as a private family property.
- Stop terrorizing the Syrian people through enforced disappearances, torture, and death due to torture.
- Stop tampering with the constitution and laws, using them to serve the goals of the ruling family, and enacting deceptive legislation.
- Take responsibility for all legal and material costs and compensate the victims and their families from the resources of the Syrian state.

The Syrian regime allies, primarily the Russian regime:

- Condemn the barbaric courts established by the Syrian regime, and demand that these be abolished along with all the associated sentences and rulings issued by them, including those legitimizing the looting of property and money.
- Put pressure on the Syrian regime to repeal all laws that contradict international human rights law, which carry overbroad and vague phrases that can be easily applied to political opponents.
- Demand that the Syrian regime separate the different state powers and stop encroaching on the judicial and legislative powers.

- Stop supporting a regime that conducts political trials which are considered the most reprehensible in modern history, since this support is direct complicity and participation in the multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes which the Syrian regime has perpetrated and continues perpetrating against detainees and their property.
- Contribute to dissolving the regime's security services whose members outnumber the army and pose a direct threat to Syrian society, as well as to the country's judiciary and its citizens' human rights.
- Stop supporting the current Syrian regime and apologize to the Syrian people for all violations committed by Russian forces.
- Supporting a genuine political transition away from the dynastic dictatorship of one family and its brutal security services is the only way to achieve security, stability and reconstruction.
- Launch investigations regarding the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold all those involved accountable.
- Reconstruct and restore the residential buildings and shops destroyed by Russian military forces, and compensate victims throughout the duration of their displacement.
- Stop investing in the Syrian regime, which is hostile to the vast majority of the Syrian people, and which is involved in committing crimes against humanity, and support a process of real political change in order to achieve stability.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary humanitarian law.

The Coalition (US-led coalition forces and Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition must expedite the process of compensating and apologizing to the victims and all those affected.
- Support a local election process in northeast Syria that leads to local councils representing the people of the region and the affiliation of military forces to them, then start to support reconstruction operations.
- The states supporting the SDF 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, including forced conscription, and to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and the principles of international human rights law in the areas under their control.
- Support the process of establishing a genuine local administration in the northeastern regions of Syria, in which all the inhabitants of the region may participate without discrimination on the basis of race and nationality and without the intervention of the de facto authorities in order to achieve stability and justice.
- 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.
- Support the building and establishment of an independent judiciary that prohibits military parties from carrying out forced conscriptions against children.

Syrian Democratic Forces:

- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF forces, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and affected.
- Stop all forms of child conscriptions, disclose the fate of all forcibly disappeared children, allow their families to visit and communicate with them, in preparation for releasing them.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the SDF planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:

- Ensure the protection of civilians in all of the areas under their control. Also, all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army should distinguish between civilian and military targets, and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Pledge to cease any conscription of children, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- End arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, confiscation and looting of property, and all other measures that violate the most basic principles of international human rights law.
- Launch investigations into the human rights violations that took place, hold those responsible accountable, and make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people.

Humanitarian Organizations:

Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons, primarily widows and orphans.

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