



The Syrian Regime even Betrays the Local Truces it Makes The “Bombardment of the Vegetables Market” Massacre as an Example

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I. Introduction

Idlib city has been under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh Al Sham Front since 28 March 2015. Idlib city is populated by no less than 170,000 people.

On 24 September 2015, the city was subject to a truce that was made mainly by Ahrar Al Sham faction, one of the factions that compose Jaish Al Fateh, and the Syrian regime which provided for a full cease of military operations and aerial bombardment in Idlib city and some of the affiliated villages in return of some demands including the passage of aids to Al Fou’a and Kafrya villages which are of a Shiite majority that supports the Syrian regime. This truce was breached multiple times by the Syrian regime and its allies where we highlighted the most notable breaches, which manifested in a number of massacres, in a past report entitled: [“Russian Forces Breach UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and Kills Idlib Residents”](#).

On 11 June 2016, the two sides agreed to extend the truce. However, exactly on the next day, 12 June, the Syrian regime aerial forces bombed the vegetables market in the city which resulted in a horrific massacre which this report documents. This massacre was an explicit indication that the current regime doesn’t respect even the truces that it makes let alone agreements enforced upon it.





SNHR contacted a number of the city residents, eyewitnesses, survivors, and local media activists where this report includes three accounts. We have explained the purpose of these interviews for the witnesses and they gave us permission to use the provided information in this report.

Also, we have reviewed the pictures and incidents we received and verified its authenticity, these pictures and videos show the huge destruction that resulted from the bombardment and the many shops and vehicles that was burned in the bombardment. We have copies of all the videos and pictures mentioned in this report.

The investigations included in this report have proven that the targeted areas are civil areas where there is no military centers or weapon warehouses for armed opposition factions of extremist Islamic groups before or during the attack.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual magnitude and severity of the violation that occurred. Additionally, the report doesn't cover the social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Details

Sunday 12 June 2016 at approximately 13:00 PM, fixed-wing government forces warplanes fired three missiles that targeted the vegetables market and its vicinity. The market is located in the northwestern parts of Idlib city.

The vegetables market contains shops that sell gas tanks and fuel. The bombardment caused many gas tanks to explode which resulted in big fires in shops and vehicles. The bombardment resulted in the killing of 40 civilians including 13 children and two women. Furthermore, the market was heavily destroyed and the Al Thurra bakery (An automatic bakery) was damaged. Also, a number of buildings were damaged such as the urban loans bank, the commercial mall, and Idlib chamber of commerce.





The [following URL](#) shows an approximate location of the city market and the locations where the missiles were dropped



One of the workers at the Free Syrian Army observatory told us that the warplanes that carried out the airstrike was su 24 which is a type of fixed-wing warplanes that are possessed by government forces and its ally Russian forces. He adds that the plane took off from t4 airbase in the suburbs of Homs and not Hmeimim airbase which is a Russian military airbase.

SNHR contacted Mr. Wasim Khalaf, a media activist who visited the bombardment site, via Facebook:

“The explosion of the gas tanks impeded us from getting closer to film the targeted location. Everything was burning in the market, shops, vehicles, and victims. I saw three cars blowing up and its parts were flying in the air. I saw a kid burning beneath a car. I saw men and women running around in panic.”

“There is a warehouse for gas tanks in the market and apparently the cylinders exploded which led to the big fires.”

“The area that was targeted was a vital area where markets, bakeries, and shops are located. This area is used daily by the civilians and there is no military centers or warehouses for the Free Syrian Army.”





SNHR contacted, via Facebook, Mr. Mutea Jalal, head of the media office at the civil defense center:

“The destruction and fires were immensely huge. I saw two dead bodies of a man and a woman that were burned completely, and I saw smoke coming out of the dead body of a kid. One of the missiles hit a workshop for bicycles repairs which was destroyed completely and there were two victims inside. I counted 25 dead bodies in the incident site. However, the death toll exceeded 44 victims on the next day following the massacre.”

“There is only shops, grocery stores, and restaurants in the area. There is no military presence in the area, but the regime is used to burn and kill civilians. They are burning us.”

Mr. Rafea, whom SNHR contacted via WhatsApp, told us of what he saw:

“I saw the warplanes that targeted the market. I was away from the targeted site but I was able to recognize it. It was a Sukhoi 24 warplane which is one of the regime warplanes and usually cause massacre. The warplanes dropped its load which was three or four missiles.”

III. Appendixes and Attachments

Pictures of the [destruction](#) after government forces warplanes [fired missiles](#) that targeted a [market](#) in Idlib city





Picture of a hole caused by one of the missile that fell in the main street of [the market](#)



[Damages in the Al Thurra bakery](#) caused by a bombing by government forces warplanes

[Damages](#) in the place where the second missile was dropped by government forces warplanes

[Videos](#) showing the [destruction](#) after government forces warplanes fired missiles that targeted a market in Idlib city, 12 June 2016

[Videos](#) of the civil defense teams pulling out victims after government forces warplanes fired a missile near the [Al Thurra bakery](#)

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

1- The Syrian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, the Russian regime violated Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.

2- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted armless civilians. Therefore, the government forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which amount to a war crime where all elements were fulfilled.





3- The attacks mentioned in this report, which have been carried out by the Syrian regime, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area rather than a specific military object.

4- The aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, and significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Recommendations

The Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps as it has been a year since Resolution 2254 was adopted which states explicitly “that all parties 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.”
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- To instill security and peace in Syria and implement the norm of the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect the lives, culture, and history of the Syrian people from being thieved and ruined.
- To expand the sanctions to include the Russian and Iranian regime who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Office must submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on this horrific massacre.

The International Community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, Steps must be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect them from the daily killings and siege and increase the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction must be activated 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 in tens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were drought out. Therefore, steps under Article 7 of the Rome Statute must be taken and the norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, must be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- To renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- To work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and work on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

Acknowledgment

Our thanks and condolences for the families and local activists who majorly enriched this report.

