

The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in the First Half of 2020

Explosive Devices, Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Deteriorating Economic Situation Are the Most Prominent Factors Affecting Syrian Citizens' Lives in the First Half of the Year

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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.

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I. Introduction and Methodology

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report focuses on the human rights situation in Syria in the first half of 2020, and compares it with what SNHR documented in the first half of 2019, in addition to what SNHR documented in June 2020. This report also catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights indiscriminate attacks and the use of outlawed weapons (cluster munitions, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons) and attacks on civilian objects.

The report also includes documentation of violations distributed according to the perpetrator parties responsible for each one. Accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks. On some occasions, when we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for specific attacks to one particular party, as in the case of air strikes by Syrian or Russian warplanes, Syrian-Iranian attacks, or attacks by Syrian Democratic Forces and the US-led coalition, we indicate that responsibility for these attacks is held jointly by the parties in question until we are able to likely establish which one of the parties was likely responsible, or it's proved that the attack was a joint initiative carried out in coordination between the two parties.

This report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on information from our extensive network of relations with various sources that have been built up over the course of our work since 2011. When we receive information or learn some news about violations via the internet or media outlets, our team works to follow up these reports and attempts to verify information and collect evidence and data. In some cases, researchers are able to visit the incident location promptly, although this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks involved, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the scarcity of human and material resources to carry out this work. Therefore, the opportunities available to access evidence vary between one case and another, and consequently the level of certainty in classification of each incident varies. SNHR's customary policy in such cases is to rely on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the Internet and media outlets. We also talk with medical personnel who treated the injured in these incidents and examined the deceased victims' bodies and identified the cause of death.

SNHR also analyzes videos and photographs that our team has documented, or which were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. These videos and photos show, amongst other things, sites of attacks, and the bodies of the deceased victims and the injured, the scale of destruction, and the remnants of the incendiary and cluster munitions and other munitions used, whilst other photos may show victims killed under torture, and victims amongst medical and media personnel who died in attacks carried out by parties to the conflict. We also retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in these reports, which are also reviewed in this report, in a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies, and we ensure always that all these data are stored with their original source. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by the Syrian Regime forces and some other armed groups. Readers are welcome to find out more about our methodology.¹

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

¹ "Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology", Syrian Network for Human Rights, <http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf>

II. Outline of the First Half of 2020

Dates of Major Events:

January and February 2020 saw the continuation of military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in the Idlib region in northwest Syria, causing significant destruction to many cities and town, such as [al Nayrab](#) town, and the displacement of their residents; these operations were also accompanied by an advance by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, taking control of many cities and towns, the most important of which were Kafr Hamra, Hraitan and Anadan in the suburbs of Aleppo, and Ma'aret al Numan, Kafranbel, Saraqeb, Mardikh, Kafr Sijna, and Ma'aret Harama in the suburbs of Idlib.

The first half of 2020 saw three ceasefire agreements in Idlib region:

The first: Announced on January 9, 2020, when Major-General Yuri Borenkov, chief of the Russian Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Parties in Syria, [declared](#) the start of a ceasefire in Idlib region, starting at 14:00 on the same day, which had no actual effect, even in briefly reducing the frequency of military attacks.

The second: The [Turkish Ministry of Defense](#) announced that it had concluded a ceasefire agreement with Russia that would enter into force at 00:01 on January 12, 2020.

Despite this agreement, the ground attacks by Syrian Regime forces did not stop, while the air strikes by Syrian-Russian alliance forces resumed after only two days on January 14, 2020, when the SNHR's Monitoring team recorded Russian fixed-wing warplane airstrike on Khan al Sebel town in the southern suburbs of Idlib, with an ensuing escalation of military action, including bombing, thereafter; on January 15, Syrian Regime forces committed a massacre that is considered the largest in terms of casualties in northwest Syria since April 26, 2019, in Idlib city, resulting in the death of 22 civilians.

Following the second ceasefire agreement, the military campaign focused on the western suburbs of Aleppo, killing dozens of civilians and perpetrating attacks on vital civilian facilities. We issued [a report](#) outlining the most notable violations committed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in light of this agreement.

The third: The agreement that resulted from the meeting of the Turkish and Russian Presidents, which came into force at 00:00 on March 6, 2020, and is the fifth agreement in the region since April 26, 2019. It is worth noting that Russian forces committed a massacre against IDPs in Ma'aret Misreen town in conjunction with consultations between the Turkish and Russian Presidents, which concluded to a ceasefire agreement, in reference to a desire to kill as many people as possible before the beginning of the ceasefire. We issued [a report](#) on this massacre.

In the period between the last two agreements, Syrian Regime forces and their allies managed to make advances on the ground which were the most extensive since April 26, 2019, seizing control of an area amounting to approximately 35 percent of the land area that had been outside regime control. By taking control of that area, the regime has tightened its control over the M5 Damascus-Aleppo International Road.

The last ceasefire agreement on March 6 stipulated the conduct of joint Turkish-Russian patrols on the M4 Latakia-Aleppo Road starting from March 15. This decision was rejected by the people, who were supported by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, with this rejection supported by sit-ins on this road which limited the movement of patrols, until the first patrol was conducted without obstacles on May 5, following meetings between the Turkish forces and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham. We note that we monitored the entry of dozens of Turkish military convoys to the Idlib region in northwest Syria which took up positions at dozens of points across the areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces in the Idlib region.

As a result of the ceasefire which came into effect on March 6, the SNHR monitored the cessation of air strikes by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces, while recording some ground attacks by Syrian Regime forces and its allies, though these are the lowest numbers of such attacks compared to previous months, with the COVID-19 pandemic, which spread in conjunction with this agreement, apparently affecting the military capabilities of the Syrian regime's army and affiliated Iranian militias, which has contributed to a reduction in the rate of their killing of Syrian civilians. However, the Russian forces violated this agreement between the fifth and ninth of June by launching raids on the contact lines, which extended to populated areas and resulted in civilian casualties.

We have also documented the continuation of Syrian Regime forces and affiliated militias' [pillaging](#) and [looting of civilians' property](#) in the areas the regime has taken control of in the Idlib region in northwest Syria, which is a systematic strategy by these forces, and it is not limited to the residential buildings that the residents left when they were displaced from them, but they also affect vital facilities such as mosques. we issued [a report](#) on this phenomenon. The SNHR team also monitored [excavations of graves](#) carried out by Syrian Regime forces in the areas it had controlled this year.

A lack of security prevailed in most areas of Syria in the first half of 2020, with SNHR documenting dozens of assassinations by unknown persons in Daraa governorate, most of which were against former fighters who had made a settlement with the Syrian regime. We also documented killings by unknown persons in most of the areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, primarily concentrated in the two badiyas of the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa; the most prominent of these was found out with the discovery of the bodies of 21 shepherds in separate locations in the Badiya of al Sabkha district in the eastern suburbs of Raqqa on January 5, all of whom had been summarily executed by gunshots. The SNHR is still trying to contact survivors or witnesses of the incident to obtain more details.

We also documented bombings in the areas under the control of the Syrian National Army forces in Aleppo suburbs, Raqqa suburbs, and Hasaka suburbs, and have thus far been unable to determine the perpetrators. These bombings killed and injured dozens of civilians. The most notable of these was a massacre caused by the explosion of a car bomb of unidentified origin on April 28 in Rajou Street in Afrin city, which resulted in the deaths of at least 44 civilians. Most of those killed in the blast were reduced to charred bodies, including nine children and three women, while 55 other people sustained injuries or burns.

The Afrin region in northwest Syria saw clashes between factions affiliated with the Syrian National Army and civilians in May, with these clashes resulting in civilian casualties.

In addition to this, dozens of people were killed by the explosion of landmines whose origin is so far unidentified, mostly in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour and Hama, and in areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces.

In May, we also recorded several incidents of clashes between civilians in light of the insecurity witnessed in most areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, which resulted in civilian casualties, especially in northwest Syria and in Deir Ez-Zour suburbs; the most prominent of these incidents was a fight that broke out between the al Bouferyo clan and the al Bakir clan in Mashekh village, which is administratively a part of al Bseira district in the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, which resulted in the deaths of at least 12 victims.

On March 22, the Syrian regime's president, Bashar al Assad, issued [Legislative Decree](#) No.6 of 2020, granting a general amnesty for the crimes committed before the date of issuance of the decree, which focused on securing the release of perpetrators of crimes, felonies and offences, while including only a very small number of the detainees referred to exceptional courts such as the Counter-Terrorism Court and the military field courts, and excluding the largest proportion of detainees who were not subjected to any trial during the years of their detention, who have been classified as forcibly disappeared. The Syrian regime has not taken any steps indicating its commitment to implementing this decree, as SNHR documented the release of only 121 detainees from the Syrian regime's detention centers, since the issuance of Amnesty Decree No. 6 of 2020 until July 2020. This record includes only those arrested in connection with their participation and activities in the popular uprising for democracy, or those who were arrested randomly or based on malicious security reports without a warrant, with the security branches conducting investigations into them and extracting confessions under torture, with the effects of deliberate malnutrition and medical negligence being clearly visible in these detainees. We [issued two reports](#) on this decree and the subsequent arrests and releases.

On May 27, Russian and US forces conducted the first joint patrol since their forces entered Syria, in the vicinity of Deir Ghosn village in Hasaka governorate, northeast of Syria.

On May 30, 2020, the Syrian regime's president, Bashar al Assad, issued [decrees](#), in which he dismissed and replaced the incumbent governors in five Syrian governorates, namely Homs, Daraa, Suwayda, Quneitra, and Hasaka; this was followed by [Decree](#) 143, on June 11, dismissing the Prime Minister, Eng. Imad Khamis, from his post and assigning Eng. Hussein Arnous to his duties. We issued [a report](#) on the Syrian regime appointing military leaders involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes to the highest levels of civilian leadership in the state.

Since June 7, peaceful demonstrations broke out in and around Suwayda city, protesting against the increasing cost of living and the deteriorating economic situation, with the protesters chanting slogans calling for the release of the detainees, and the departure and the fall of the Syrian regime. On June 15, we recorded [assaults](#) on demonstrators in Suwayda city by Syrian regime law enforcement personnel and pro-regime militias wearing civilian apparel (shabiha). This was followed by regime forces hunting for and arresting a number of activists and civilians who participated in protests, all of whom were forcibly disappeared. Among those detained were government employees who had earlier been arbitrarily dismissed from their jobs due to their dissent with the Syrian regime. We issued [a report](#) on the incident.

Syrian Democratic Forces [announced](#) in a statement on June 10 that the first phase of their operation codenamed 'Deterring Terrorism' had ended in a search for ISIS cells in the southern suburbs of Hasaka and the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, extending to the Iraqi-Syrian border. During this operation, we recorded the arrest of dozens of civilians, including juveniles, in addition to looting and pillaging of property belonging to civilians during the raids.

On June 15, the United Nations [issued](#) its Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, which included more than 25,000 grave violations against children. The report stated that six grave violations against children in armed conflicts around the world occurred in 2019, namely: child recruitment and use, killing, maiming and raping, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian aid. Syria was ranked the second worst country globally for perpetrating grave violations against children in 2019.

On June 24, the United Nations contacted humanitarian organizations operating in northern Syria to notify them that the Russian regime had informed the UN the previous day that it would not participate in the de-confliction mechanism, which the United Nations and its humanitarian partners use to exchange information with parties to the conflict. We note that SNHR has documented Russian and Syrian Regime forces' targeting of several medical facilities participating in this mechanism, further confirming that the Syrian regime and Russia do not adhere to any mechanisms or laws, and that they always strive to deliberately cause the greatest harm to civilians.

Indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons:

During the military campaign by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in the Idlib region in the first two months of this year, the Syrian regime followed its usual scorched earth policy, using various types of weapons extensively against civilian areas, particularly barrel bombs; in January, we recorded the use of this weapon in Aleppo governorate for the first time since February 2018. This use continued until February 14 when factions of the Armed Opposition managed to shoot down a Syrian regime helicopter in Idlib suburbs, resulting in an almost complete cessation of attacks using barrel bombs.

Cluster munitions were also used in several attacks during this Syrian-Russian alliance campaign, with SNHR issuing [a report](#) on the attacks we documented, with the most notable of these being was the Syrian regime attack using cluster munitions on a civilian area in Sarmin city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, whose targets included a school and an IDP shelter; as a result, nine civilians were killed, most of whom were children and women. We issued [a statement](#) about this incident.

On April 8, an international investigation team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons issued a report holding the Syrian Air Force responsible for three chemical weapons attacks targeting al Latamena town in Hama governorate, western Syria, in 2017. [The report](#) stated that the attacks took place using chlorine and sarin gases deployed using bombs fired by Sukhoi SU-22 aircraft and a Syrian regime helicopter. On the day after the report was issued, the Syrian Government's Ministry of Foreign and Expatriates issued [a statement](#) claiming that the report of the international organization "has included false and fabricated conclusions which aim at forging facts and accusing the Syrian government."

Arrest and enforces disappearance:

Since the beginning of 2020, we have documented an increasing rate of hunt-and-arrest operations carried out by Syrian Regime forces against individuals who had settled their security status in areas that have signed settlement and 'reconciliation' agreements with the regime after it took control of these areas; these arrests have been concentrated in the governorates of Aleppo, Damascus Suburbs and Daraa, with some targeting former workers in humanitarian organizations, medical personnel and relief workers. We have also documented the arrest of a number of people for making phone calls to areas outside the Syrian regime's control, communicating with people wanted by the regime, or in connection with their movement between the areas controlled by the Syrian regime and those under the control of the other parties to the conflict, with those detained including elderly people, women and children. We have also recorded arrests targeting those who illegally returned from Lebanon to their home towns, who have been charged with terrorism, as well as arrests in connection with expressing dissenting opinions, particularly targeting writers and political figures, as well as civilians, who participated in anti-Syrian regime protests mainly in the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Suwayda.

We also recorded arrests targeting those who illegally returned from Lebanon to their cities, who have been charged with terrorism. For this, we always recommend that refugees or IDPs should not return to the Syrian regime-controlled areas because there are no real guarantees that the regime will not subject them to arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, or forced conscription. We also recorded arrests of civilians, including children, women, and elderly people, by Syrian Regime forces as they were passing through regime checkpoints whilst moving between or traveling to areas outside the Syrian regime's control.

On June 24, we recorded that Syrian Regime forces released 49 detainees, including three children and one woman, from Daraa governorate, who were released from detention centers of the Syrian regime in the governorates of Damascus and Daraa, under Russian mediation and through an amnesty decree. Some of those released were former members of the Armed Opposition factions who had previously had made a settlement of their security status prior to their arrest.

The period of detention for those released ranged from three months to two years. Among those released were several people who faced criminal charges rather than being arrested in connection with activism or their participation in the popular uprising towards democracy.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of 2020, Syrian Democratic Forces targeted humanitarian workers with arrests by raiding their workplaces or homes, arresting some of them collectively. These arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Raqqa and Hasaka. Syrian Democratic Forces also pursued and arrested people, including women and children, who had close kinship relationships to members of the opposition factions or ISIS, in order to pressure their family members to surrender. We also recorded an increasing rate of arrests with the aim of forced conscription, which targeted children to take them to the group's military training camps. In addition, we recorded a number of arrests carried out by Syrian Democratic Forces with the support of the US-led coalition during which children and people with special needs were arrested on specious ISIS-related charges.

In the first half of this year, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham also continued targeting activists, humanitarian workers and clergymen for arrest, due to criticizing the group or failing to coordinate with its institutions in their work. At the beginning of 2020, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham also continued its arrests of a number of civilians who were deported from Turkey and sentenced some of these individuals to death. We have also documented Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's targeting of civilians who took part in anti-demonstrations or who had arguments with the HTS' security forces, mainly in the camps under their areas of control in Idlib and Aleppo. These arrests 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 travelling or passing through temporary checkpoints.

The Armed Opposition and the Syrian National Army have also escalated their arrests and detentions of civilians on the pretext of their former affiliation with the SDF despite the conclusion of settlements with the group, and in many cases targeted several members of the same families, with most of these arrests being characterized by an ethnic bias and, in the manner of kidnapping, forcibly disappearing those arrested. We also recorded many incidents during which the faction responsible for the arrest requested money in exchange for the release of the detainee, with the Armed Opposition and the Syrian National Army not excluding women, children and the elderly from these arrests and kidnappings, all of which occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions.

Displacement and forced displacement:

The wave of displacement witnessed in northwest Syria this month is the worst on the humanitarian level in light of the shrinking areas still left outside the control of Syrian Regime forces and dire weather conditions, as well as the weak response of humanitarian organizations. On March 12, [the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) released its tenth report on the humanitarian situation in northwest Syria, in which it stated that approximately 960,000 people were displaced between December 1, 2019, and March 12, 2020, with most of those displaced since January 15, having been displaced more than once.

The recent ceasefire that entered into force on March 6, 2020, which halted the air strikes of Syrian-Russian alliance forces, contributed to the return of approximately 280,000 IDPs in May and June to their homes in areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, according to the SNHR's estimates, after they were reassured that the Syrian regime would not mobilize to control these areas - at least at this stage. While we expected a wider return of IDPs, we have only seen a limited return of IDPs due to the widespread lack of confidence in the settlement agreements, which have been frequently and repeatedly violated, as well as due to the destruction and collapse of homes. We issued [a report](#) on the displacement caused by Syrian Regime forces and allies following the advance made on the ground in its recent military campaign against the Idlib region in northwest Syria, and the destruction that accompanied it, with the report detailing the destruction in the cities of Ma'aret al Numan and Saraqeb as examples by analyzing satellite imagery the SNHR obtained.

Camps in northwest Syria continue to suffer from the deteriorating humanitarian situation. We have recorded several incidents of fires breaking out in camps, whether due to misuse of [cooking facilities](#) or electrical [short circuits](#). The strong winds and [rainstorms](#) that struck the area also damaged [dozens](#) of [tents](#) inside the camps, as well as causing a number of casualties. In addition, we recorded casualties among the residents of the random camps caused by [venomous animals](#), with these camps lacking fences to protect the residents living in them from potentially lethal attacks by these creatures.

In the al Hawl Camp in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka, during the first half of this year, we monitored the imposition of restrictions by the so-called Women's Hisba, which consists of female partners of ISIS fighters, on other women in the section designated for them in al Hawl Camp through imposing and disseminating ISIS ideology such as the obligation to wear the hijab and publishing books and videos, which include material promoting the group. We also documented the killing of a number of civilians inside al Hawl Camp by stabbing with sharp objects by unidentified assailants. We have also documented cases of the release of dozens of families from al Hawl Camp, most of whom are from the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa, through tribal sponsorship by tribal sheikhs from the eastern region.

In addition, the French government [announced](#) that it had repatriated 10 children of ISIS families from al Hawl Camp on June 22.

On February 6, [Russia](#) also repatriated 26 children who were transferred from al Hawl Camp to Moscow through Qameshli airport. It is noted that many European countries still flatly refuse any effort to repatriate ISIS families of their own nationalities who are detained inside al Hawl Camp.

Al Rukban Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian border is still subjected to siege imposed mainly by Syrian Regime forces, who often prevent personnel from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) from delivering aid to the camp, leaving the camp residents in horrendous circumstances and in constant need of relief and aid, with only the most basic needs.

On January 10, the UN Security Council [adopted a resolution](#) extending the authorization for the mechanism that allows cross border delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria, but only for six months and only through two border crossings with Turkey. This came after Russia and China vetoed the renewal of Security Council Resolution 2449, which required that the United Nations be re-authorized to provide aid to Syria using border crossings, which are not controlled by Syrian Regime forces, on December 20, 2019.

On June 17, Germany and Belgium [submitted](#) a draft resolution to the Security Council to extend approval for the Turkish border crossings for one year and reopen the Iraq crossing for six months.

On June 18, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [released](#) the annual Global Trends report, in which it stated that Syria alone accounts for a total of 13.2 million refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons, accounting for a sixth of the total numbers of people in these categories at the global level.

COVID-19 pandemic:

At the beginning of this year, the COVID-19 first appeared in the Chinese city of Wuhan, spreading gradually all over the world, including Syria, whose authorities acknowledged the 'first' case of infection in the country on March 22, 2020.

The Syrian regime and its allies took advantage of this pandemic to demand the lifting of sanctions imposed against it, completely ignoring that the main reasons behind the deterioration of the health sector in Syria are targeting hundreds of medical facilities, and the arrest of thousands of medical personnel by the Syrian regime and its allies; we've received a number of reports stating that the regime's security forces have also threatened staff at medical centers, preventing them from announcing any cases of infection or death due to COVID-19 and severely restricting all data announced by the Ministry of Health. Instead, medical personnel don't

declare all cases and are reportedly forced to issue misleading reports to victims and their families ascribing deaths believed to result from the COVID-19 to other causes. All ministries in Syria are effectively controlled by the security services, a result of the totalitarian mindset that affects every aspect of the dictatorship which the people languish under.

The Syrian regime has also failed to take any serious precautionary measures to introduce social distancing to prevent the spread of the pandemic in regime-controlled areas, which could lead to a high mortality rate among citizens; indeed, it has done the opposite, with the SNHR documented crowded gatherings of Syrian citizens [in front of ATMs](#), [bread distribution points](#), [in front of official departments](#), and at [points of sale of consumables](#). The Syrian regime took a decision, on April 28, to allow the resumption of all activities, reopening commercial and industrial shops and services, [markets witnessed unprecedented overcrowding](#) as a result in gross violation of the most basic precautionary measures.

Last May saw several countries controlling the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and beginning to ease the strict measures introduced in previous months in order to allow the gradual return of normal life; however, the situation was different in Syria, which started to announce the increase of the number of infections and deaths due to the virus, [announcing](#) on June 30 that the number of infections reached 279, of whom nine had died. By comparing these numbers with what was announced at the end of May, it becomes clear that 75% of the infection cases announced since March 22 were recorded in June alone; according to these statistics issued by the Syrian regime (which we believe are massively underestimated due to the weakness of the checking and controlling operations), it would normally be assumed that tougher measures would be taken. Instead, the Syrian regime announced the easing of procedures, and a near-complete return to normalcy as it allowed [transportation to work](#) and [lifted the night-time curfew](#) that was imposed, in addition to the [resumption of the Syrian league football](#) fixtures. The Syrian Network for Human Rights has documented several instances of public overcrowding in situations that make social isolation impossible, whether [in markets](#) or in [public transportation](#) and other situations, in light of the absence of any precautionary measures. The Syrian regime bears responsibility for infections and deaths due to this chaotic and wildly irresponsible decision.

In addition to the aforementioned threats from the COVID-19 pandemic, detention centers, especially those under the control of Syrian Regime forces, are suffering from an almost complete absence of healthcare, in addition to being overcrowded with detainees; as the SNHR has already confirmed, most of the detainees, especially those in the four main security branches and military prisons, have an average area for each person not exceeding 70 cm² in cells that lack ventilation and the most basic standards of sanitation and cleanliness. In light of the

detainees' contact with the security personnel who mix with people in the outside world and particularly with members of Iranian and Iraqi militias coming to Syria from pandemic-afflicted areas, and in light of the decision issued by the Syrian government to prevent visits to prisons and its failure to adhere to the principle of transparency in revealing the situation of the detainees, there are increasing fears of the runaway spread of COVID-19 within these centers, with the Syrian regime demonstrating its continued complete indifference to the wellbeing, fate and lives of detainees through its failure to initiate the release of any of the tens of thousands of those arbitrarily arrested as a result of their participation in demonstrations for political change

The Syrian regime's failure to release arbitrarily detained persons, especially those held without charges, and the elderly, is clear evidence of the regime's primary responsibility in the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it controls and manages state institutions, and has completely failed to protect Syrian civilians, instead harnessing the state's capabilities to protect the ruling family and to continue their totalitarian rule

As for the areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces in northwest Syria, especially in the IDP camps and shelter centers, the congested conditions there encourage the spread of the pandemic in the event of its emergence there, with these massively overcrowded camps lacking the most basic means for residents to follow the essential precautionary measures, as these areas are crammed with civilians, hindering the achievement of any social distancing (which requires a space of 1 - 1.5 m between people). The camps also lack adequate water and hygiene resources, in addition to residents being forced to share sanitary facilities for each sector in the camp, which lack the necessary hygiene measures to limit the spread of the pandemic. In the absence of any precautionary measures, the situation becomes predisposing to the spread the pandemic in case it emerges there, especially as it suffers from inadequate medical capabilities due to the lack of beds and equipment that could contribute to meeting the needs of all citizens there. With the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, the situation has worsened. We monitored crowds in the [markets](#), [play grounds](#) and [mosques](#) to perform the prayers, indicating a lack of awareness and societal commitment to the threat of the pandemic. We released [a report](#) on the most notable challenges for medical personnel, IDPs, detainees and the needy in Syria amid the spread of the COVID-19.

On April 30, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham opened a commercial crossing linking areas under its control with the areas controlled by Syrian Regime forces in Ma'aret al Na'san village in the northern suburbs of Idlib, in violation of the precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus pandemic; however, it suspended work on this crossing following civilian protests in the area. HTS used live bullets to disperse these protests, killing one civilian.

Economic situation:

In May, Syrian markets saw an unprecedented rise in consumer prices following the severe additional collapse in the value of the Syrian pound, which came in conjunction with the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic crisis, as well as the Lebanese banks crisis, and the Syrian regime's hostilities with Rami Makhlouf, who is considered one of the wealthiest Syrian regime beneficiaries. All these factors caused an additional rise in unemployment rates, which affected the daily paid workers and various groups in Syrian society. Unless the 13 million Syrians who are currently displaced, are able to return, the destruction of cities and looting of property are ended and the corruption networks are cut off, we will witness an additional decline in the Syrian economy, with the only possible practicable escape from this catastrophic situation being through a political solution implemented according to a strict timetable not to exceed six months, as the Syrian state can no longer bear any further burdens.

In mid-June, the northwest areas of Syria [started adopting](#) the Turkish lira as an alternative to the Syrian currency in light of the collapse of the value of the Syrian pound.

Coinciding with the harvest season in May, we recorded [incidents](#) of [fires breaking](#) out, for [unknown reasons](#), in agricultural fields and orchards, which devoured hundreds of hectares of crops in most areas in Syria; most of these blazes were concentrated in areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces, who did not conduct any investigation to reveal the cause of the fires, which were ruinous for landowners and property owners.

The activities of the Fourth Brussels Conference entitled 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region', organized by the European Union in cooperation with the United Nations, took place between June 22 and 30, with the aim of providing financial support from the international community to Syria and to neighboring countries hosting refugees.

Road to Accountability:

On January 31, French [authorities arrested Majdi Nimah](#), known as 'Islam Alloush', a former leader and spokesman for the Jaishal Islam faction, in Marseille city, and charged him with war crimes and torture.

On April 23, the [first session of the trial of Anwar Raslan](#), a former Syrian General Intelligence officer, was held in the German city of Koblenz for charges on crimes against humanity committed between March 2011 and September 2012, when he was responsible for investigations in the General Intelligence al Khatib Branch in Damascus, also known as Branch 251.

On June 17, [a court in Paris sentenced](#) Rifaat al Assad, the uncle of the Syrian regime's president Bashar al Assad, to four years in prison for "money laundering and misappropriation of public funds" in Syria, and for confiscating all his real estate assets in France, which are estimated to be worth nearly 90 million euros. It also confiscated one of his real estate assets in London, with a value of 29 million euros.

On June 17, the United States of America began implementing the 'Caesar Act' under which [sanctions were imposed on 39 individuals or entities](#) related to the Syrian authorities, including the president of the Syrian regime and his wife, Asma al-Assad. We point out that the US Senate approved the law - within the Defense Department's budget for 2020 - on December 17, 2019, and the US President later signed it into law.

On June 18, it was [announced that a criminal case would be filed](#) with the German Federal Public Prosecutor against officials of the security services in Syria, on behalf of seven Syrians who survived torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers, all of whom had been subjected to sexual violence. The case was drafted by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, and was presented jointly by the Syrian Women's Network and the Urnammu Organization.

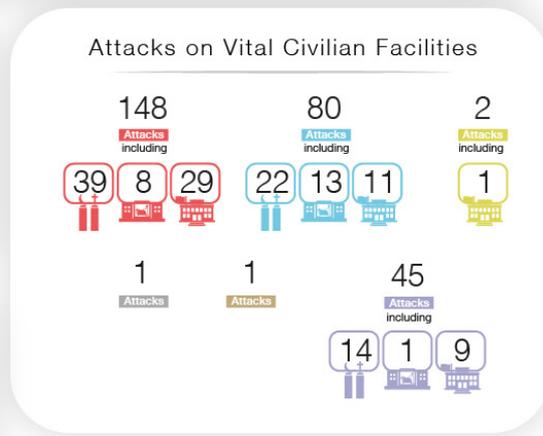
On June 22, the [German Federal Public Prosecutor announced](#) the arrest of Syrian doctor Alaa al Mousa in the German state of Hessen, on charges of committing crimes against humanity while practicing his profession in the Homs Military Hospital before he sought asylum in Germany.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights played an active role in achieving justice by signing cooperation agreements with international investigation committees and human rights organizations during the first half of 2020, during which it signed memorandums of understanding with the [Humanitarian Outcomes](#), and with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' (OPCW) [Investigation and Identification Team \(IIT\)](#). The SNHR was also among the most prominent sources of information cited in the [US Department of State's report](#) on the human rights situation in Syria 2019, in the [Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs'](#) report on the general situation in Syria issued in May 2020, and in [the European Asylum Support Office's](#) May 2020 report on the security situation in Syria. SNHR also contributed to the suit brought [against Anwar Raslan](#) by providing data extracted from the SNHR's database on victims of torture.

III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in the First Half of 2020

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in the first half of 2020 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in the first half of 2020



Record of Indiscriminate Attacks and Attacks Using Outlawed Weapons

4

At least 474 barrel bombs were dropped by the Syrian Regime air force, resulting in the deaths of 13 civilians, including 4 children and 2 women (adult female)

 Civilians
  Women (adult female)
  Children
  Media Workers
  Medical Personnel
  Civil Defense Personnel
  Places of worship
  Medical Facilities
  Schools
  Cluster Munition attacks

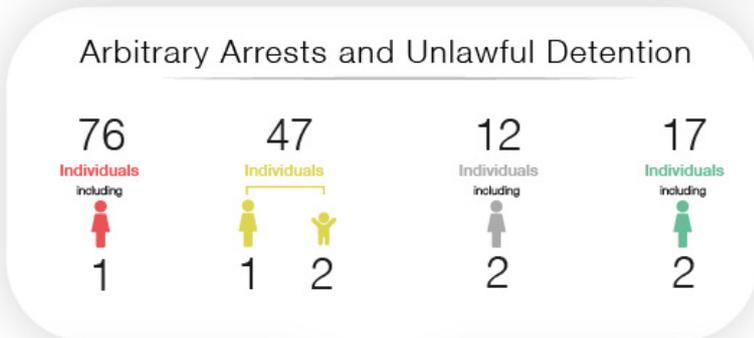
● Syrian Regime forces
 ● Russian forces
 ● ISIS
 ● Extremist Islamist groups:

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham
- Turkistan Islamic Party

● The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army
 ● SDF (mainly PYD)
 ● Other parties

The report also outlines what was documented in June 2020.

Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in June 2020



- Syrian Regime forces
- Russian forces
- Extremist Islamist groups Hay'at Tahrir al Sham
- The Armed Opposition\ The Syrian National Army
- SDF (mainly PYD)
- Other parties

- Civilians
- Women (adult female)
- Children
- Schools
- Cluster Munition attacks

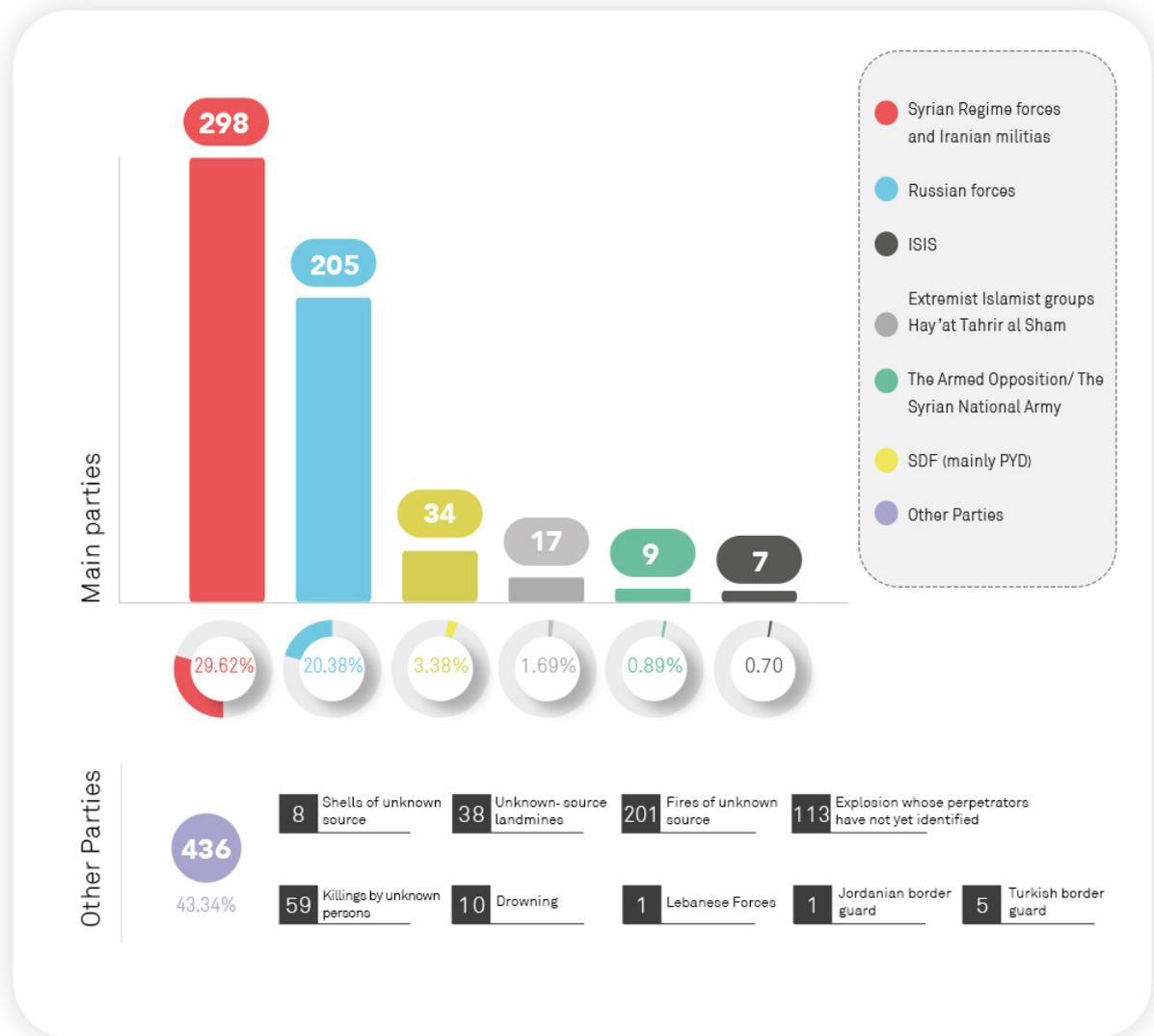
A. Extrajudicial killing:

1. In the first half of 2020:

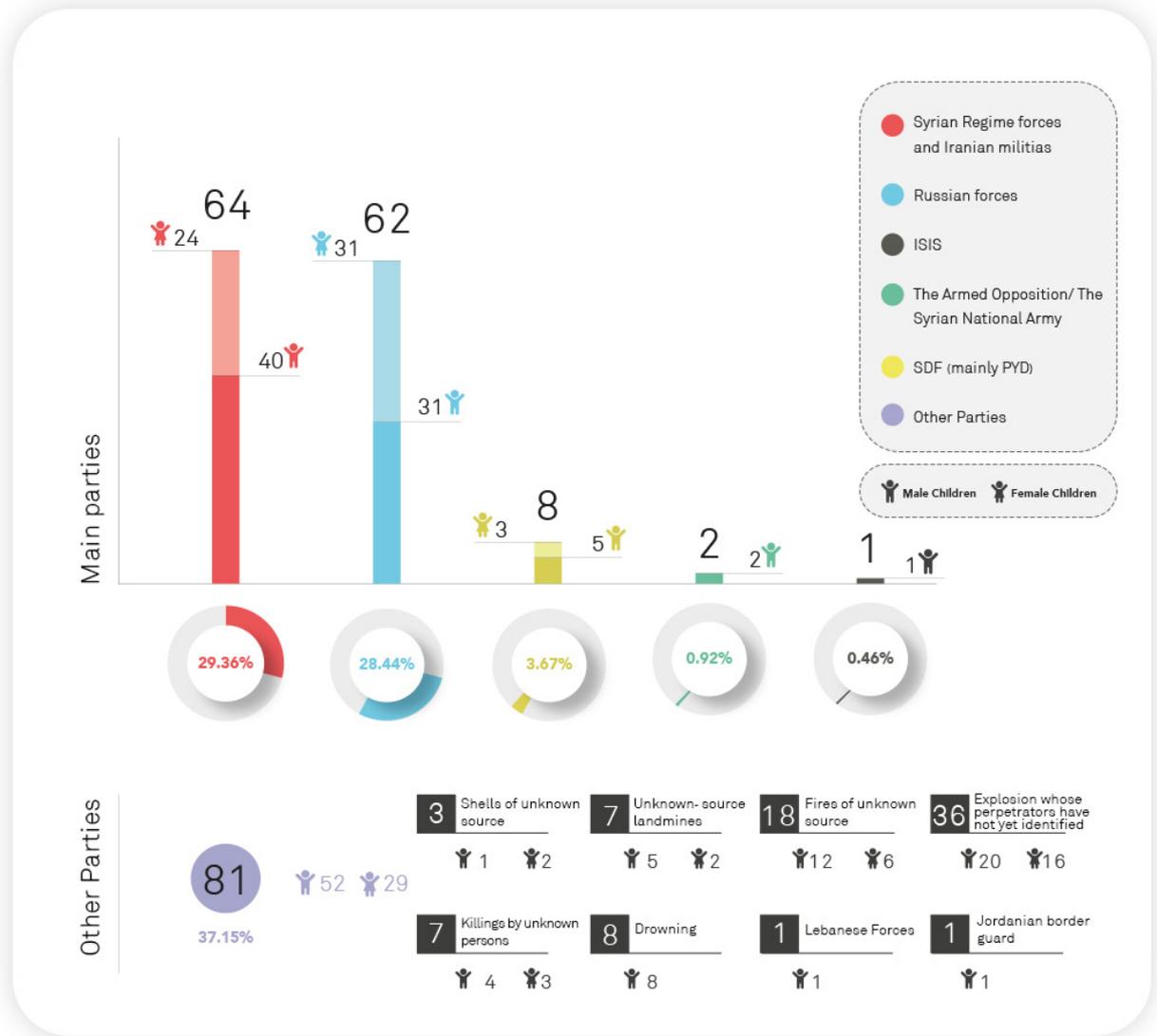
In the first half of 2020, SNHR documented the deaths of 1,006 civilians, including 218 children and 113 women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom killed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces; among the victims were nine medical personnel, three media workers, and three Civil Defense personnel. We also documented the deaths of 71 individuals due to torture, and recorded at least 30 massacres. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the death toll of civilian victims documented killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

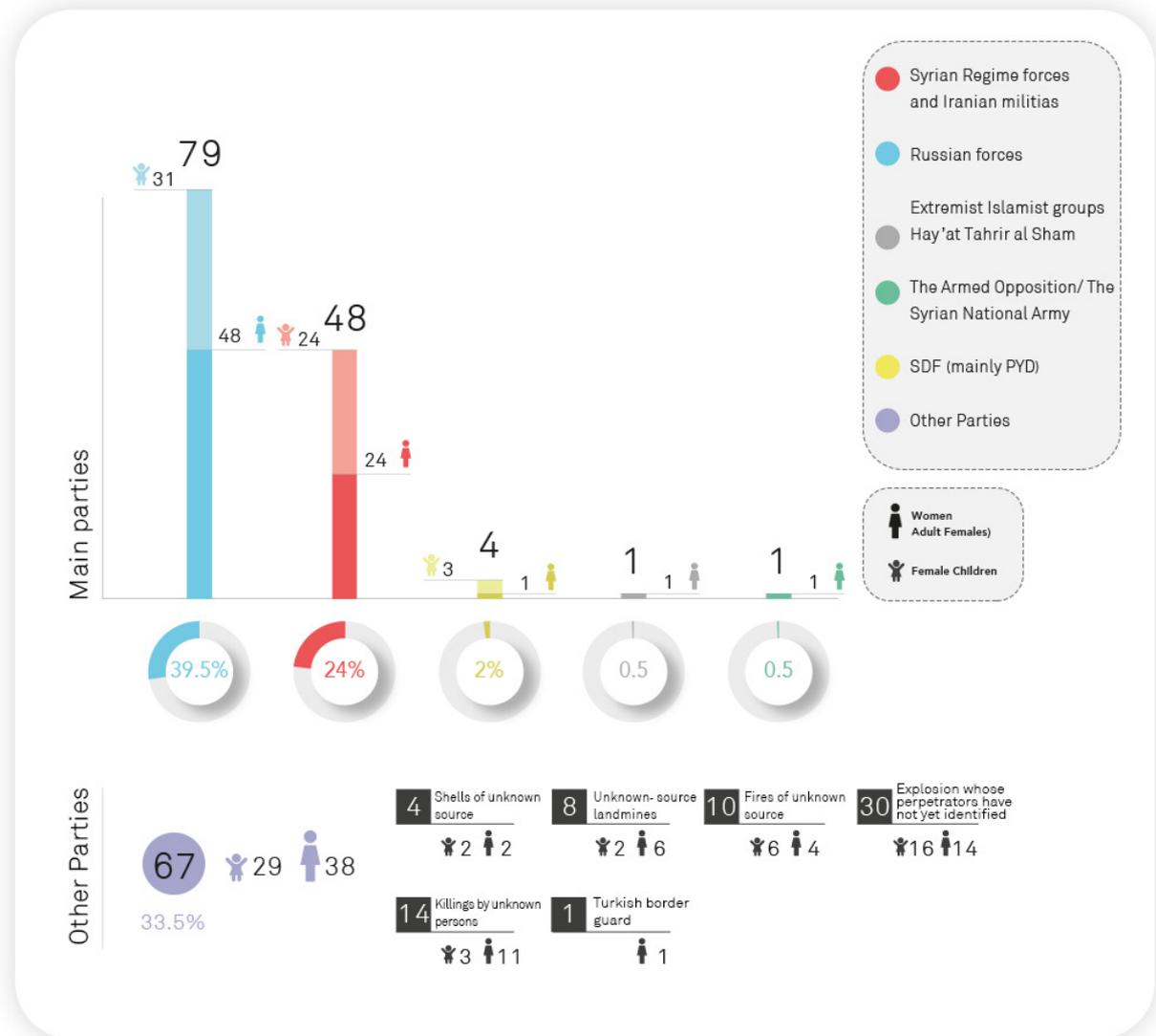
1006 civilians were killed in Syria in the first half of 2020

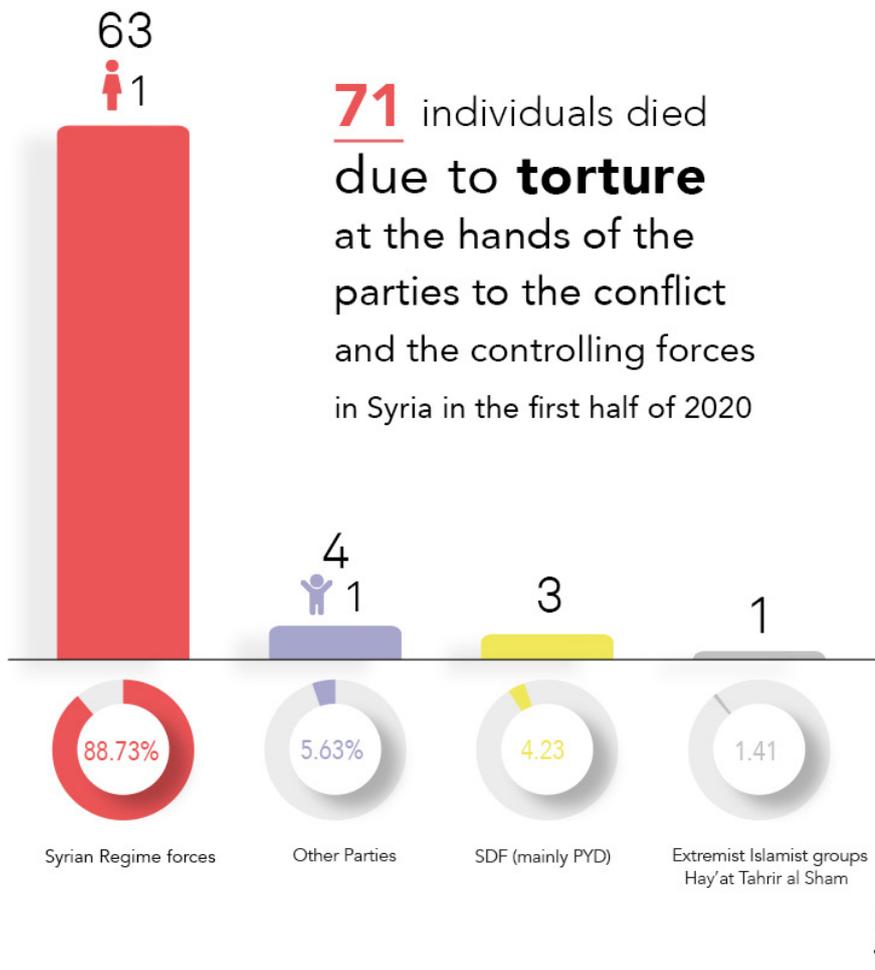


218 children were killed in Syria in the first half of 2020



200 females were killed in Syria in the first half of 2020





A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 298 civilians, including 64 children and 24 women.
- **Russian forces:** 205 civilians, including 62 children and 48 women.
- **ISIS:** Seven civilians, including one child.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition): 17 civilians, including one woman.

The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army: Nine civilians, including two children and one woman.

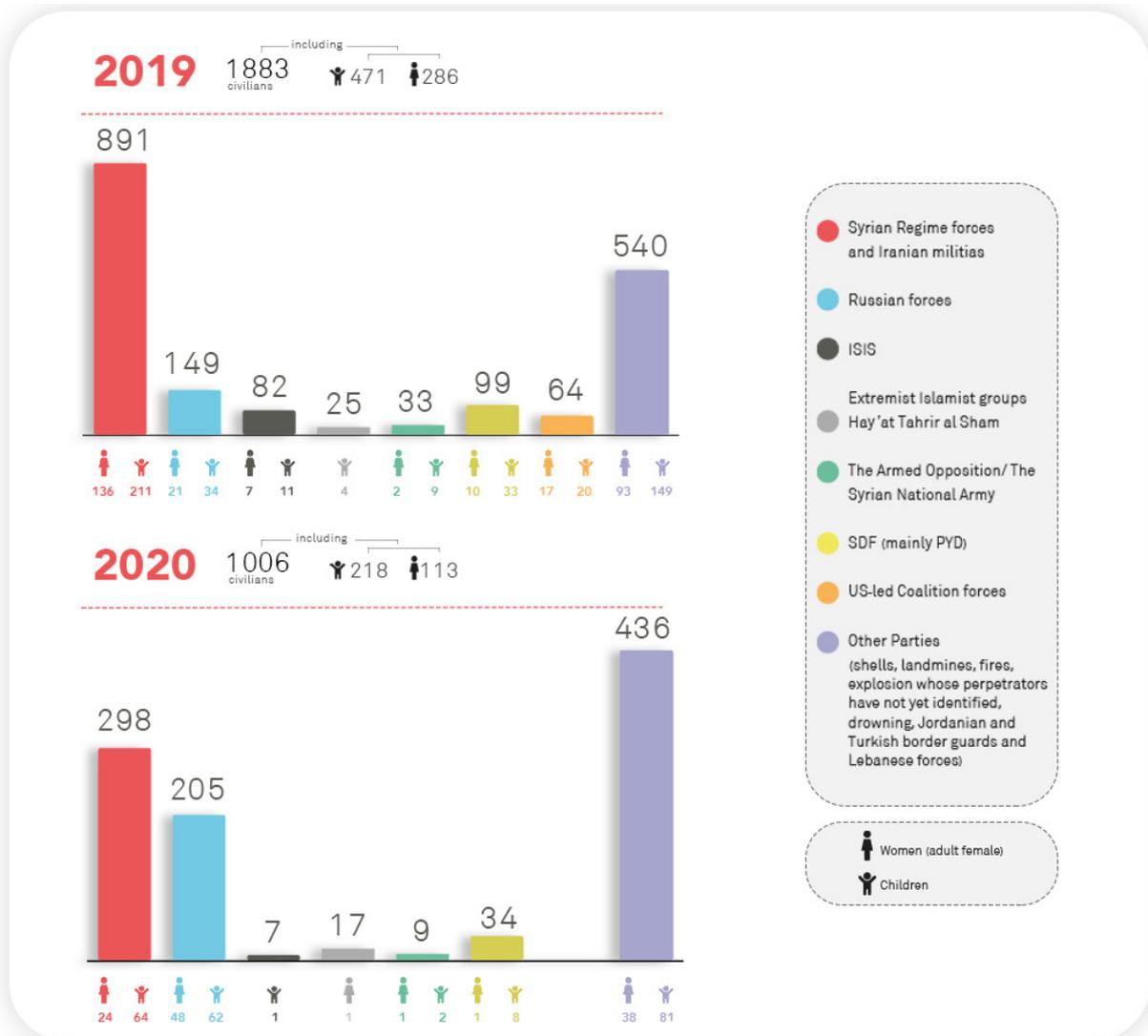
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 34 civilians, including eight children and one woman.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 436 civilians, including 81 children and 38 women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

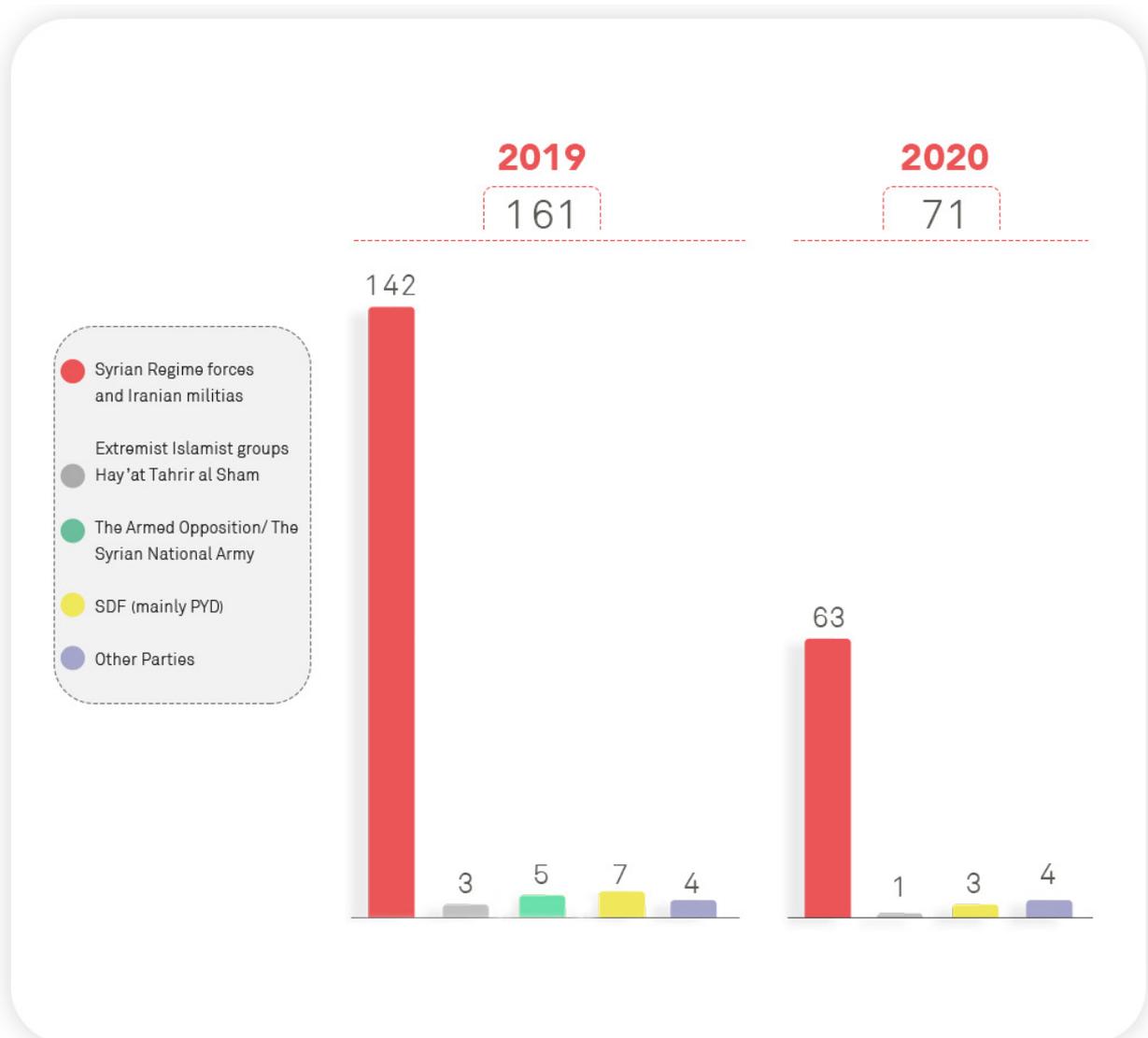
- Shelling from unknown source: Eight civilians, including three children and two women.
- Landmines of unknown origin: 38 civilians, including seven children and six women.
- Fires of unknown source: 201 civilians, including 18 children and four women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 113 civilians, including 36 children and 14 women.
- Killings by unknown persons: 59 civilians, including seven children and 11 women.
- Drowning: 10 civilians, including eight children.
- Turkish border guards: Five civilians, including one woman.
- Jordanian border guards: One child.
- Lebanese forces: One child

Comparison of the death tolls of civilian victims killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of both 2019 and 2020



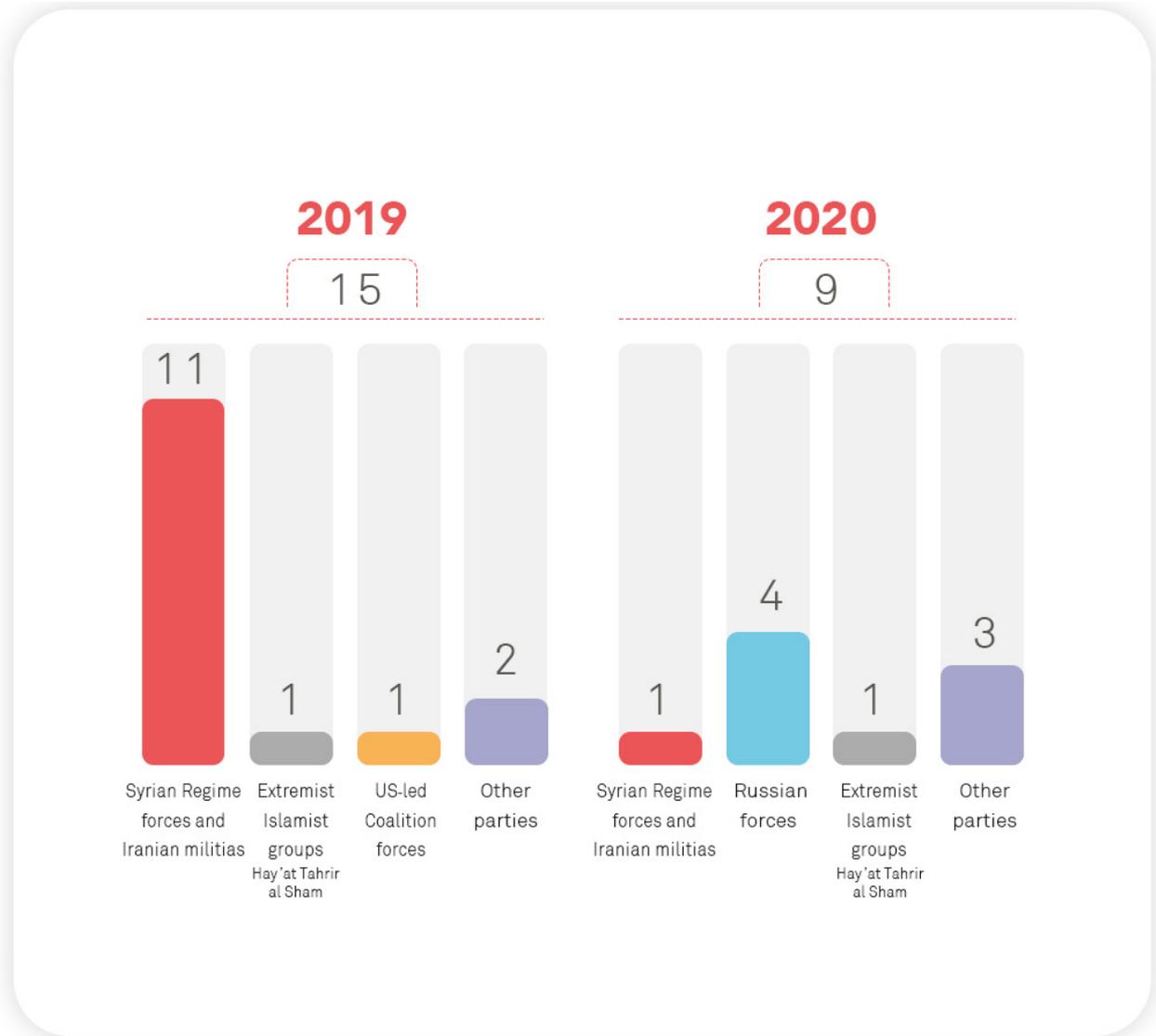
The chart above shows a reduction in the total death toll, and a variable decrease in the death toll recorded at the hands of each party to the conflict and the controlling forces in each area in 2020 compared to 2019. These reductions are due to several factors, most notably: the reduction of approximately 34 percent in the percentage of victims killed by the Syrian regime in 2020 as compared with 2019; in contrast, the chart shows an increase in the death toll at the hands of the regime's Russian ally, due to the fact that May, June and the last week of April 2019 saw a military campaign by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in the Idlib region of north-west Syria, with this region subject to ceasefire agreements since the beginning of 2020. We also note a decrease in the death toll of victims killed by ISIS and by US-led coalition forces, due to the defeat of ISIS and the subsequent end to its control over vast areas.

Comparison of the death tolls of victims who died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of both 2019 and 2020



While the chart shows a reduction in the documented death toll due to torture, this does not mean that torture activities have ever stopped. The reason for this decline in documented figures may be due to the fact that it has been more difficult for us to obtain information about deaths due to torture in 2020; there is no reason for us to believe, however, that the Syrian regime has reduced the frequency of its torture activities.

Comparison of the death tolls of medical personnel who were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of both 2019 and 2020



While the death toll of medical personnel at the hands of Syrian Regime forces has decreased, it has increased at the hands of the regime's Russian ally. It is worth noting here the double-tap airstrike policy used by the Russian air force, in which two attacks are launched on the same location within a short period in premeditated and deliberate targeting of the ambulance teams and rescue workers gathering to help the victims of the first attack.

Comparison of the death tolls of media workers who were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of both 2019 and 2020



The chart shows a 50 percent decrease in the death toll of media workers in the first half of 2020 as compared with the first half of 2019.

2. In June 2020:

In June 2020, SNHR documented the deaths of 96 civilians, including 11 children and 10 women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom killed by other parties; among the victims were 14 individuals who died due to torture. We also recorded at least two massacre.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 26 civilians, including five children and one woman.
- **Russian forces:** Four civilians, including one woman.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition): Five civilians, including one woman.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Four civilians, including one child.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 57 civilians, including five children and seven women, by other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown origin: Two civilians.
- Fires of unknown source: 28 civilians, including three children and three women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Nine civilians, including two children.
- Killings by unknown persons: 18 civilians, including four women.

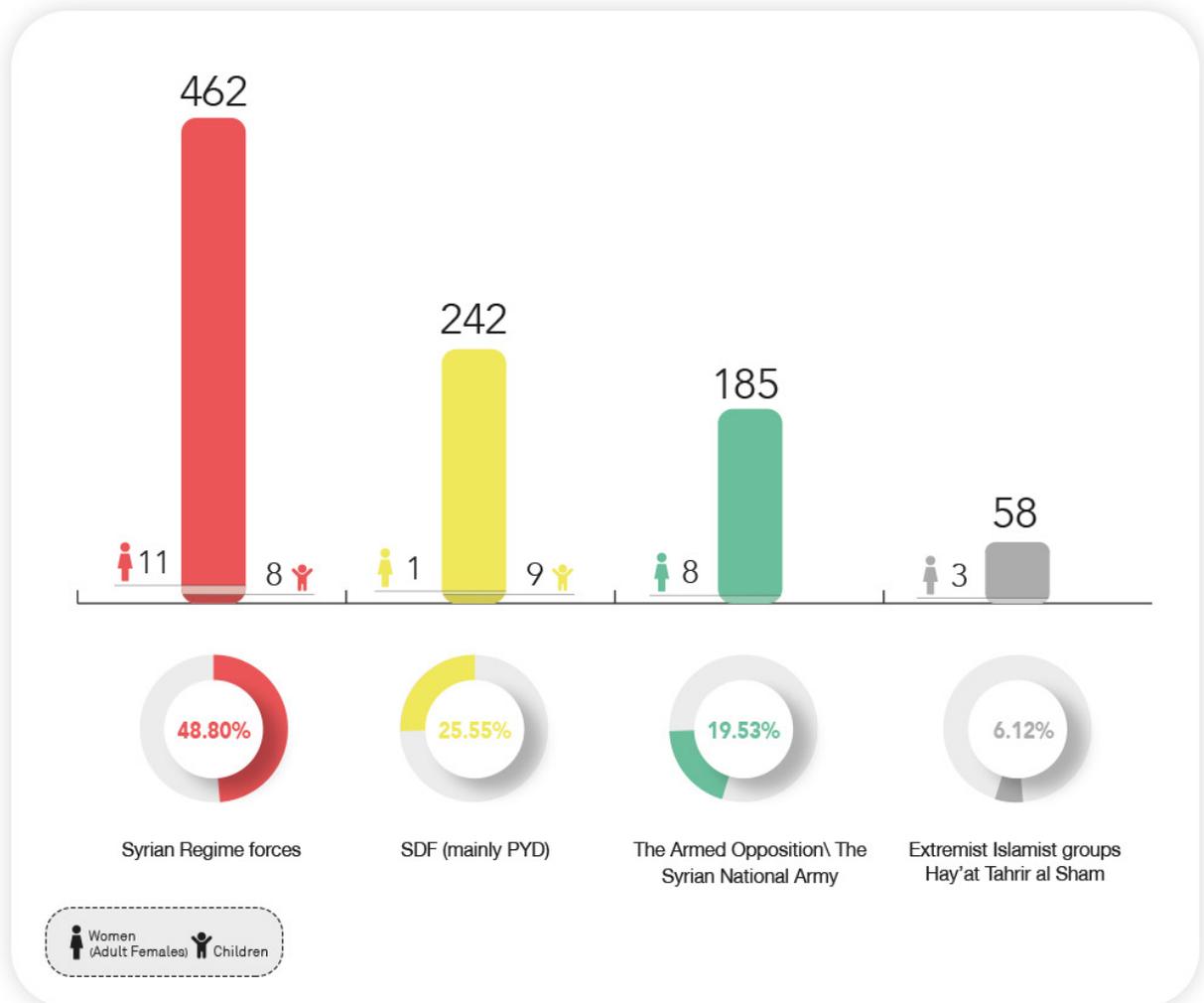
B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

1. In the first half of 2020:

In the first half of 2020, SNHR documented at least 947 cases of arbitrary arrests/ detention, including 17 children and 23 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

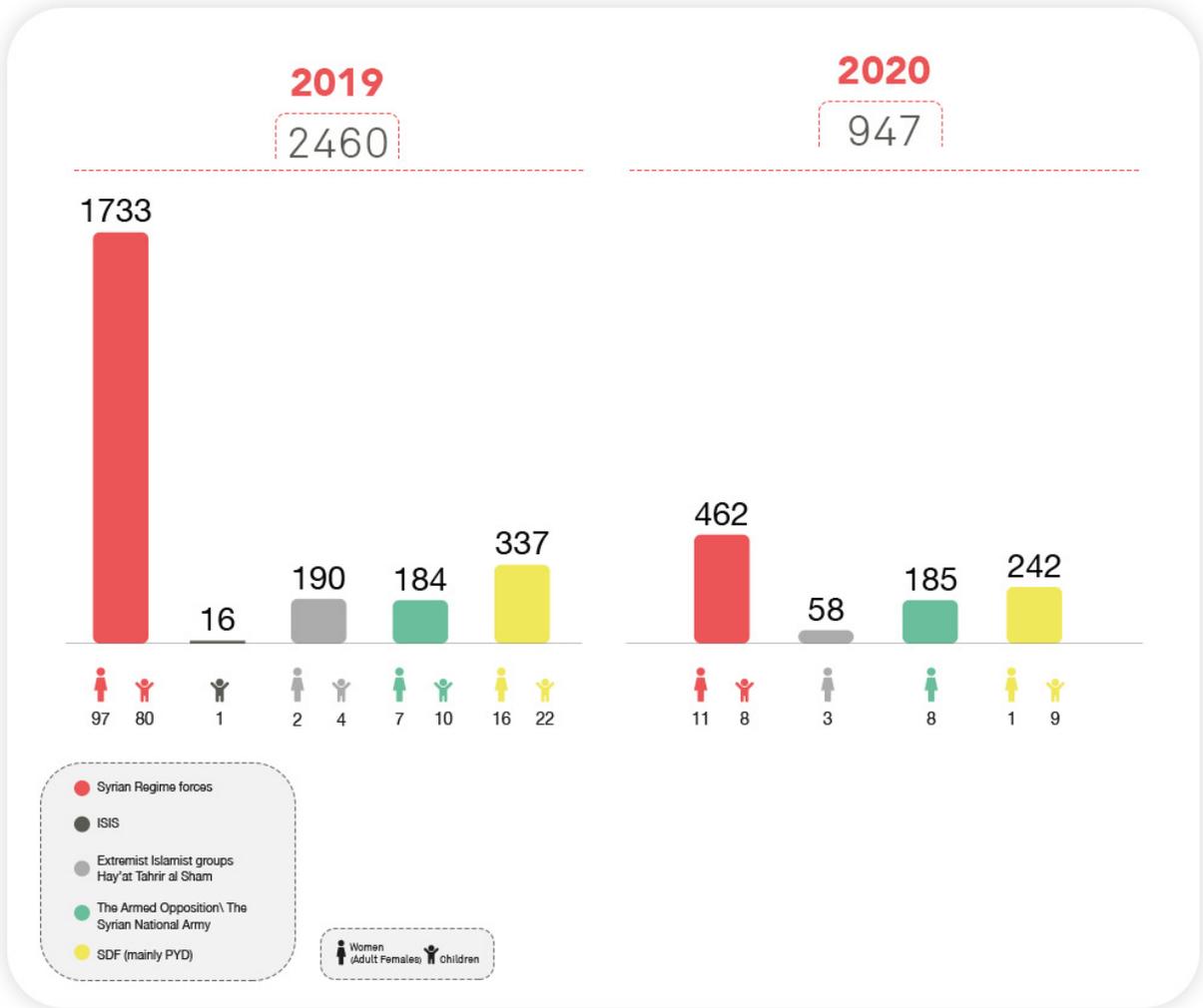
The record of cases of arbitrary arrests/ detention were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of 2020 as follows:

The documentation of at least **947** cases of arbitrary arrests at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of 2020



- **Syrian Regime forces:** 462, including eight children and 11 women.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: 58, including three women.
- **The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army:** 185, including eight women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 242, including nine children and one woman.

Comparison of the records of arbitrary arrests/ detentions by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first halves of both 2019 and 2020:



2. In June 2020:

In June 2020, SNHR documented at least 152 cases of arbitrary arrests/ detention, including two children and six women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, followed by Aleppo governorate.

The record of arrests/ detention is distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 76, including one woman.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: 12, including two women.
- **The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army:** 17, including two women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 47, including two children and one woman.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

1. In the first half of 2020:

In the first half of 2020, SNHR documented at least 277 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, 228 of which were carried out at the hands of Syria-Russian alliance forces, mostly in Idlib governorate.

Among these attacks, we documented 50 on schools, 22 on medical facilities and 75 others were on places of worship.

These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 148.
- **Russian forces:** 80.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: One.
 - Turkistan Islamic Party: One.
- **Syrian Regime Forces:** Two.

B. Other parties:

Other parties committed 45 incidents, which were distributed as follows:

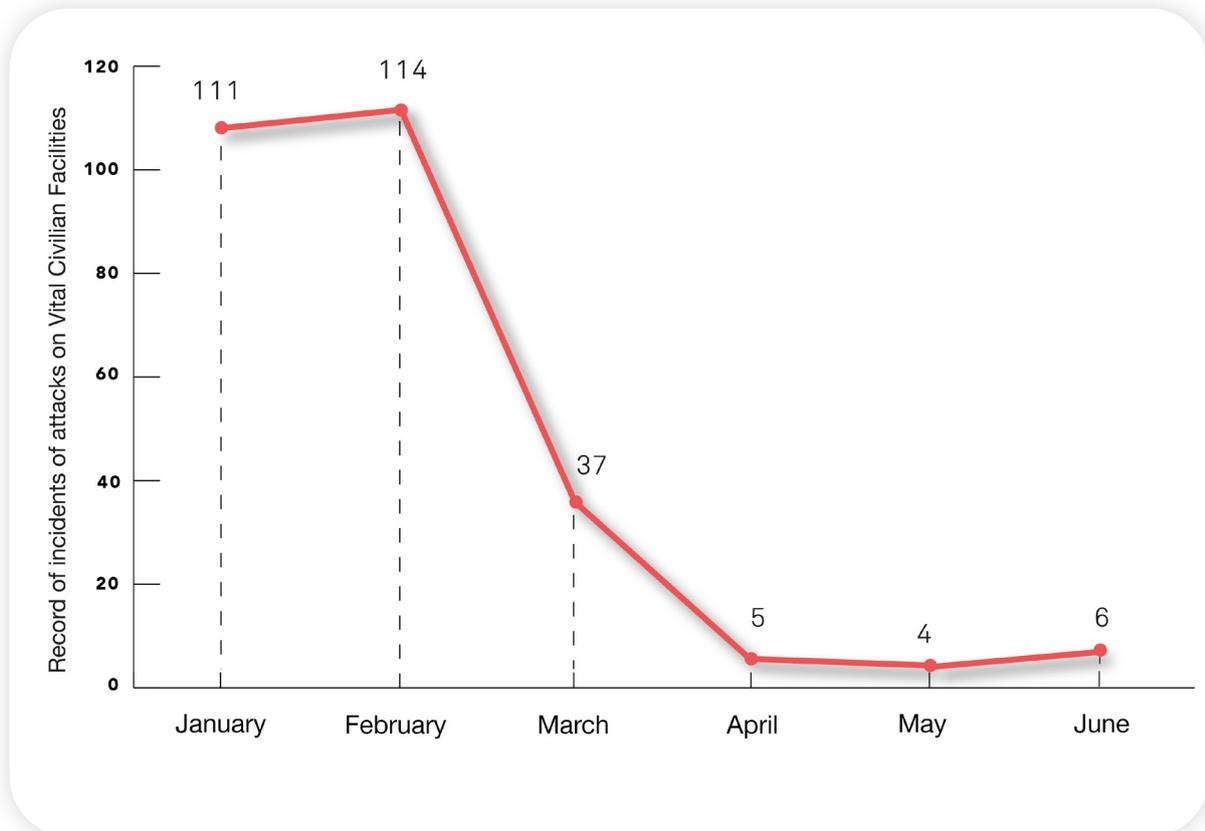
- **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** 20.
- **Shelling from unknown source:** 25.

The record of attacks documented in the first half of 2020 on vital civilian facilities was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party						
	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Extremist Islamist groups		Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties	
			Hay'at Tahrir al Sham	Turkistan Islamic Party		Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified	Shelling from unknown source
Places of Worship							
Mosques	39	22	-	-	-	-	14
Vital Educational Facilities							
Schools	29	11	-	-	1	2	7
Educational Institutions	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
Universities	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
Nurseries	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orphanages	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vital Medical Facilities							
Medical Facilities	8	13	-	-	-	1	-
Ambulances	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Vital Cultural Facilities							
Museums	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Communal Facilities							
Gardens	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Markets	20	1	-	-	1	10	1
Playgrounds and stadiums	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure							
Power stations and energy facilities	-	-	-	1	-	2	-
Civil Defense Centers	10	12	-	-	-	-	1
Water facilities and related resources	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Official Headquarters	10	5	-	-	-	1	1
Bakeries	2	4	-	-	-	-	-
Means of transport	-	-	1	-	-	2	-
Domestic animal farms	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Industrial facilities	5	3	-	-	-	-	-
Civil society organizations	2	-	-	-	-	1	-
IDP Camps							
IDP camps	9	2	-	-	-	-	-
Total	148	80	1	1	2	20	25

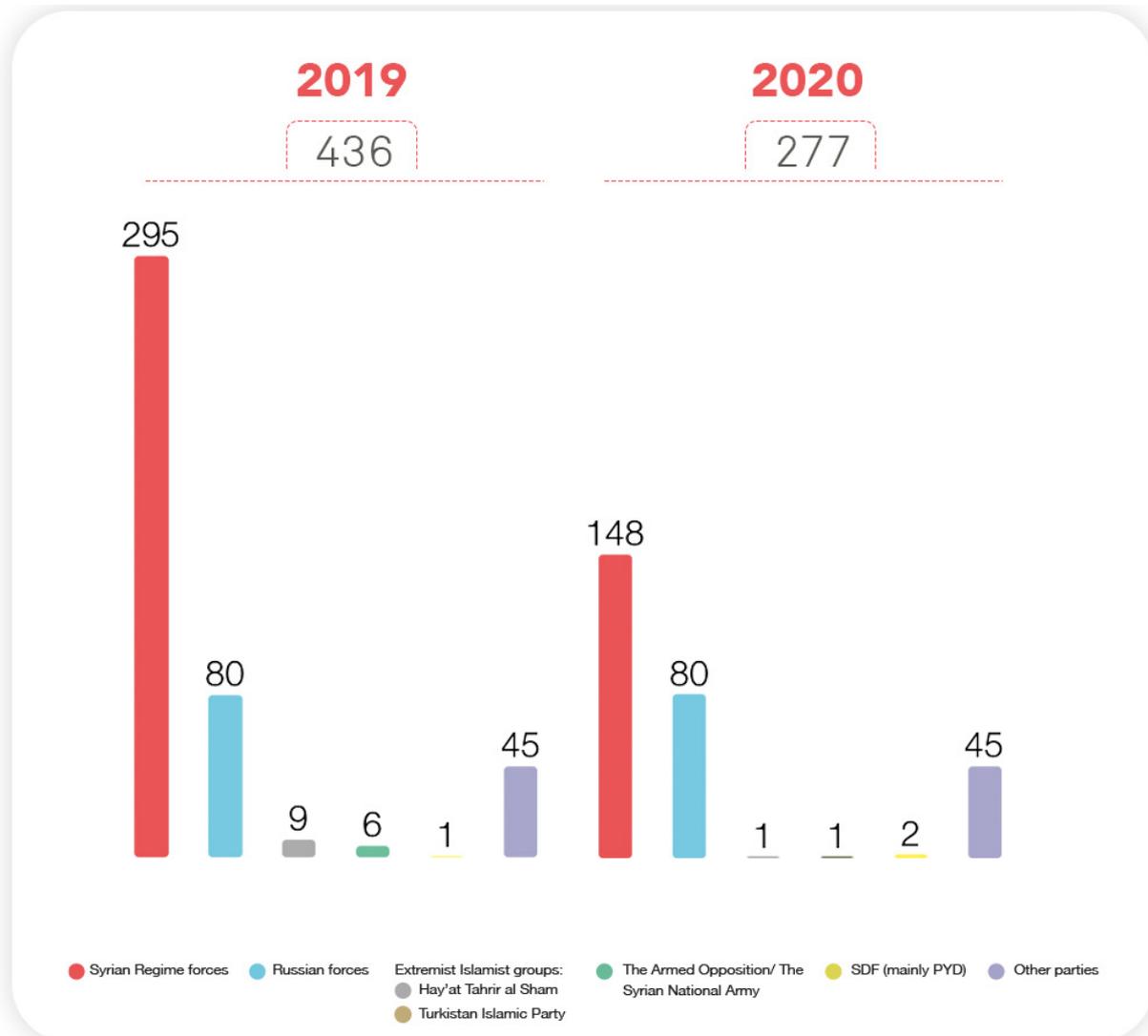
The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities in the first half of 2020 was distributed monthly as follows:

At least **277** Incident of Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities in Syria in the First Half of 2020



The previous chart shows the decline in the number of the attacks on vital civilian facilities since the beginning of 2020 to date, with the ceasefire agreement that entered into force on March 6 having had an effect on this, along with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the capabilities of the Syrian regime's army and affiliated Iranian militias. Meanwhile, the bombings and executions by unknown persons have continued, with SNHR attributing the largest percentage of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in the past four months to these causes.

Comparison of the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of both 2019 and 2020:



The chart shows a reduction of nearly 61 percent in the record of attacks carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in each area in the first half of 2020 as compared to 2019. It is clear that this decrease has been caused by several factors, the most prominent of which is the ceasefire agreement that entered into force on March 6, 2020, which was followed by an unprecedented reduction in the frequency of military operations, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the capabilities of the Syrian regime's forces and its allies.

We also notice from the charts that Syrian-Russian alliance forces are responsible for committing more than 82 percent of the total documented number of attacks in each of the two halves of the two years.

2. In June 2020:

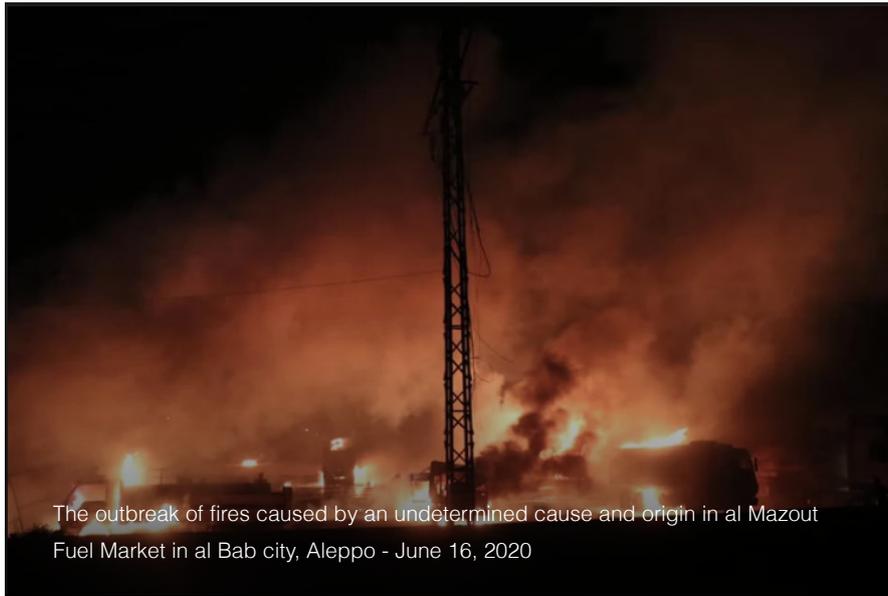
SNHR documented at least six incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities in June, all of which were bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified. Among these attacks, we documented one on a school and three on markets.

The record of attacks documented in June on vital civilian facilities was distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party
	Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified
Vital Educational Facilities	
Schools	1
Communal Facilities	
Gardens	1
Markets	3
Infrastructure	
Civil society organizations	1
Total	6

The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities in June:

On Tuesday, June 16, 2020, an explosion of an undetermined cause and origin took place, which is believed to have been caused by an IED placed in a truck loaded with fuel, in a fuel market, known as the al Mazout fuel market, in al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. This caused severe [material damage](#) to [the market's facilities](#) and [burned a number](#) of [tanker trucks](#) loaded with oil. Additionally, a Civil Defense worker Aref Barakat sustained burns and suffered the effects of suffocation while engaged in fire-fighting operations to extinguish the resulting blazes. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses to the incident to obtain more details. Al Bab city was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition supported by Turkish forces at the time of the incident.



On Saturday, June 20, 2020, an IED of so far unknown origin which was placed under a car, exploded opposite the [office of the Independent](#) Syrian Kurdish Association in Villas Street in Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, causing moderate material damage to the office's furniture and construction cladding. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses of the incident to obtain more details. Afrin city was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition supported by Turkish forces at the time of the incident.



On Sunday, June 21, 2020, an IED of so far unknown origin exploded in front of the Second al Mahatta School in al Kashef neighborhood in Daraa city, resulting in casualties, in addition to causing moderate material damage to the school's perimeter wall. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses of the incident to obtain more details. The city was under the control of factions of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

D. Record of indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons:**1. In the first half of 2020:**

SNHR documented at least four cluster munition attacks in the first half of 2020, all of which at the hands of Syrian Regime forces in the governorates of Hama and Idlib. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 12 civilians, including seven children and three women, and injured 27 others.

The Syrian regime's air force also dropped at least 474 barrel bombs in the governorates of Idlib, Aleppo and Hama. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 13 civilians, including four children and two women. At least 27 vital civilian facilities were damaged, including five schools, eight places of worship, and two medical facilities.

Comparison of the record of indiscriminate attacks perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of both 2019 and 2020:



The comparison shows a reduction in the numbers of documented indiscriminate attacks carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in each area in the first half of 2020 as compared to 2019, with SNHR attributing this decrease to the ceasefire agreement that entered into force on March 6, 2020. This was followed by an almost complete cessation of airstrikes along with an unprecedented decrease in the frequency of ground attacks, with SNHR attributing this to the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the capabilities of the Syrian regime's forces and its allies.

2. In June 2020:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented at least one cluster munition attack in June, carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Hama governorate, while SNHR was unable to document any chemical weapon attacks, barrel bombs or incendiary weapons attacks.

On Monday, June 8, 2020, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a number of [missiles carrying cluster munitions](#), targeting agricultural land near civilian homes in Qastoun town in the western suburbs of Hama, without causing any casualties. The area was under the joint control of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.



Remnants of a cluster munition incubator which was fired in a ground attack by Syrian Regime forces on Qastoun town, Hama – June 8, 2020

IV. Attachments

[1,006 Civilians, including Three Media Workers and 12 Medical and Civil Defense Personnel, Documented Killed in Syria in the First Half of 2020](#)

[At least 947 Cases of Arbitrary Arrests/ Detention Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2020](#)

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime or Russian forces prior to any attack in accordance with the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks leads to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the alliance of US-led coalition and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Extremist Islamist groups have violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.

- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, caused massive collateral damage that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive arms 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 Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations:

UN Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been repeatedly proven.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians’ lives and to save the Syrian people’s heritage and historical artefacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other permanent member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons camps, and to follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.

- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan have proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

OHCHR

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict.
- Train Syrian organizations to undertake clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the dangers of such ordnance.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.

-

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.

The United Nations Special Envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- 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 establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Reveal the fate of some 83,000 Syrian citizens arrested by the security services whose fate has been concealed to date.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.
- Stop using incendiary weapons in populated areas, compensate the victims and their families for all human and material damage caused by the use of these weapons, and provide treatment for dozens of civilian casualties.
- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 83,000 people forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime.

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

- The states of the coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Rather than attempting denial, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those affected.
- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.

- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF violates the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

Armed Opposition factions

- Armed Opposition factions must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Pledge to cease any arbitrary arrests, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian Organizations:

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

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