

No less than 46 Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities in Syria in April 2018

70% at the Hands of
Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

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.



Contents

- I. Introduction and Methodology
- II. April 2018 Outline
- III. Executive Summary
- IV. Details of Most Notable Incidents in April
 - a. Places of Worship
 - b. Vital Educational Facilities
 - c. Vital Medical Facilities
 - d. Communal Facilities
 - e. International Humanitarian Insignia
 - f. Infrastructures
 - g. Refugee Camps
- V. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Introduction and Methodology

Article 52 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 defines Civilian Objects as: “....**all objects which are not military objectives**” with **Military Objects being: “military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.”**

Civilian objects include medical facilities, educational facilities, infrastructures, places of worship, and other facilities that are used for civilian purposes.

Since March 2011, Syrian regime forces, and then Syrian-Russian alliance forces, have trumped all parties in targeting vital civilian facilities – especially in the areas under the control of armed opposition, and to a lesser degree in ISIS-held areas. We have recorded repeated attacks on thousands of vital facilities, which proves that these facilities were deliberately destroyed and corrupted. We have also recorded hundreds of massacres that resulted from attacks on such objects.



Certainly, other parties committed similar violations, but to varying degrees, and never to the extent of the crimes by the Syrian-Russian-Iranian forces.

The attacks we have recorded include deliberate bombardments that targeted civilian objects, lootings, and attacks that involve disabling these objects and undermining their purpose in serving civilians despite the lack of any pressing military necessity or these objects being used for combat purposes by a party which would have justified targeting them by the other parties to the conflict.

In light of the prolonged duration of the conflict and these facilities being continually targeted, as well as the ongoing demographic changes, a need rose for alternating the functions of some facilities (for example, many schools have been turned into IDPs shelters). We have also noticed that some facilities moved between multiple buildings and areas more than once in order to evade bombardment, while others were moved to secure sites such as caves.

SNHR has dedicated a periodic monthly report to monitor attacks on vital civilian facilities. In addition, SNHR has released extensive reports and researches on vital facilities that have been destroyed by the parties to the conflict.

Methodology

The report monitors the attacks on vital civilian facilities that we were able to document in April, except for attacks on medical facilities, civil defense facilities, and international humanitarian insignia which are documented in a separate [monthly report](#).

This report draws upon, firstly, the daily, ongoing documentation and monitoring efforts by SNHR team, and, secondly, on accounts from survivors, eyewitnesses, and local media workers that we've talked to via phone or social media. We have also analyzed a large number of the videos and pictures that were posted online or we received from local activists via e-mail, Skype, and social media. Videos posted by local activists have shown wide destruction in vital civilian facilities. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report in a secret online database, as well as backup copies on hard drives. For more information, please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [classifying vital civilian facilities](#).

This report contains a number of attacks that were perpetrated by an air force. However, we weren't able to accurately determine the party responsible for those attacks – the Syrian regime or Russian forces. Therefore, we assigned responsibility, in these attacks, to the Syrian regime/Russian forces.



This report also documents a number of incidents of attack that was the result of bombings. However, we weren't able to identify the groups behind it in light of the considerable difficulty in identifying the responsible party in such bombings. In addition, this report contains one attack in which artillery and mortar shells were used. However, we weren't able to accurately determine who fired them, as we couldn't visit the site or obtain evidences to help properly identify the source of these shells.

Most of the attacks we have documented targeted civilian areas, as our investigations have proven, where no military bases or armories were found during or before the attacks. The attacking forces didn't take into consideration the principle of proportionality. We also didn't record that the attacking forces put out warnings for civilians prior to the attack as the international humanitarian law requires.

The type and number of evidences vary from one case to another. In light of the challenges we mentioned above, many of the incidents' legal description change based on new evidences or clues that surface after we had released the report. We add these evidences and clues to our data archive. On the other hand, many incidents don't constitute a violation to the international humanitarian law, but it involved collateral damages, so we record and archive these incidents to know what happened historically and to preserve it as a national record. However, they don't necessarily qualify as crimes.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't cover the social, economic, and mental ramifications.

II. April 2018 Outline

April saw a slight drop in the number of attacks on vital civilian facilities compared to last March. SNHR recorded that Syrian regime forces topped all parties by carrying out 59% of all attacks, the majority of which were in Idlib governorate, 49%. Syrian regime forces' attacks in April targeted primarily schools, followed by medical facilities, and then mosques.

III. Executive Summary

A. Attacks on vital civilian facilities since the start of 2018

SNHR has documented 394 attacks on vital civilian facilities at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2018 and May of the same year. Attacks are distributed as follows:

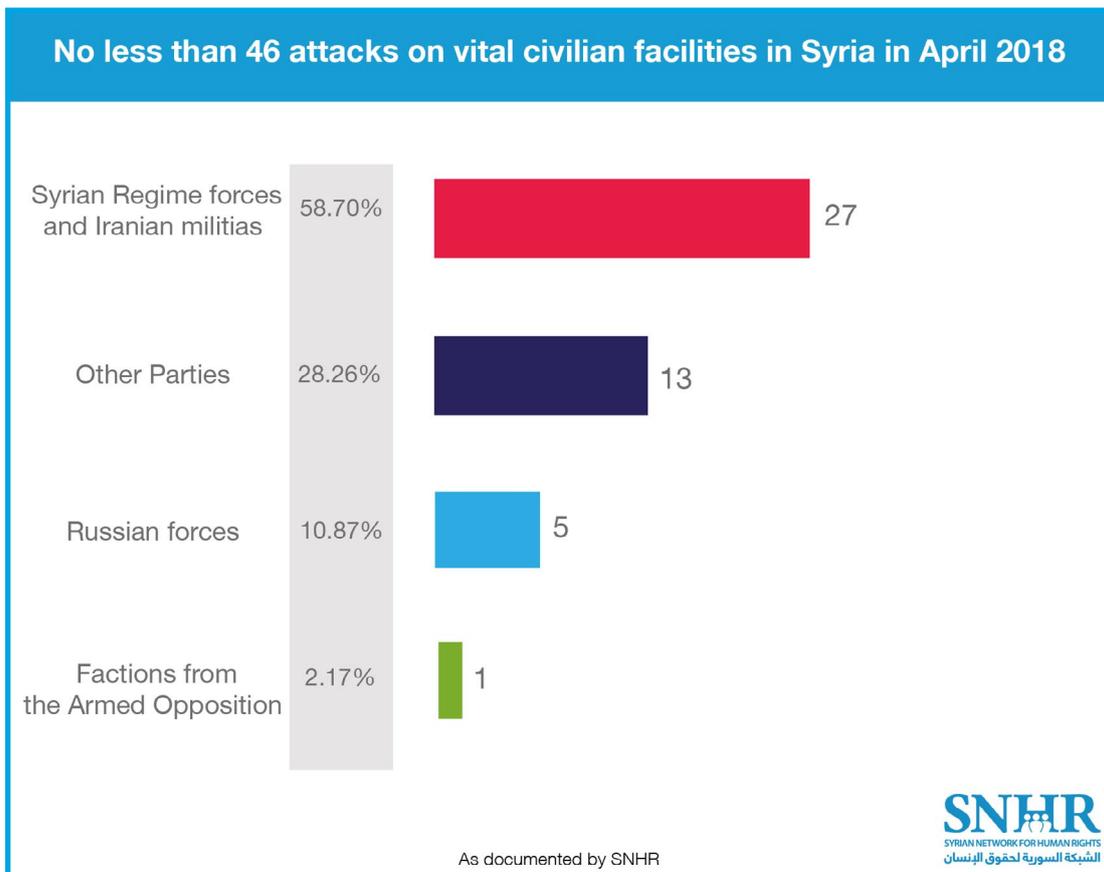


No less than 394 attacks on vital civilian facilities in Syria since the start of 2018

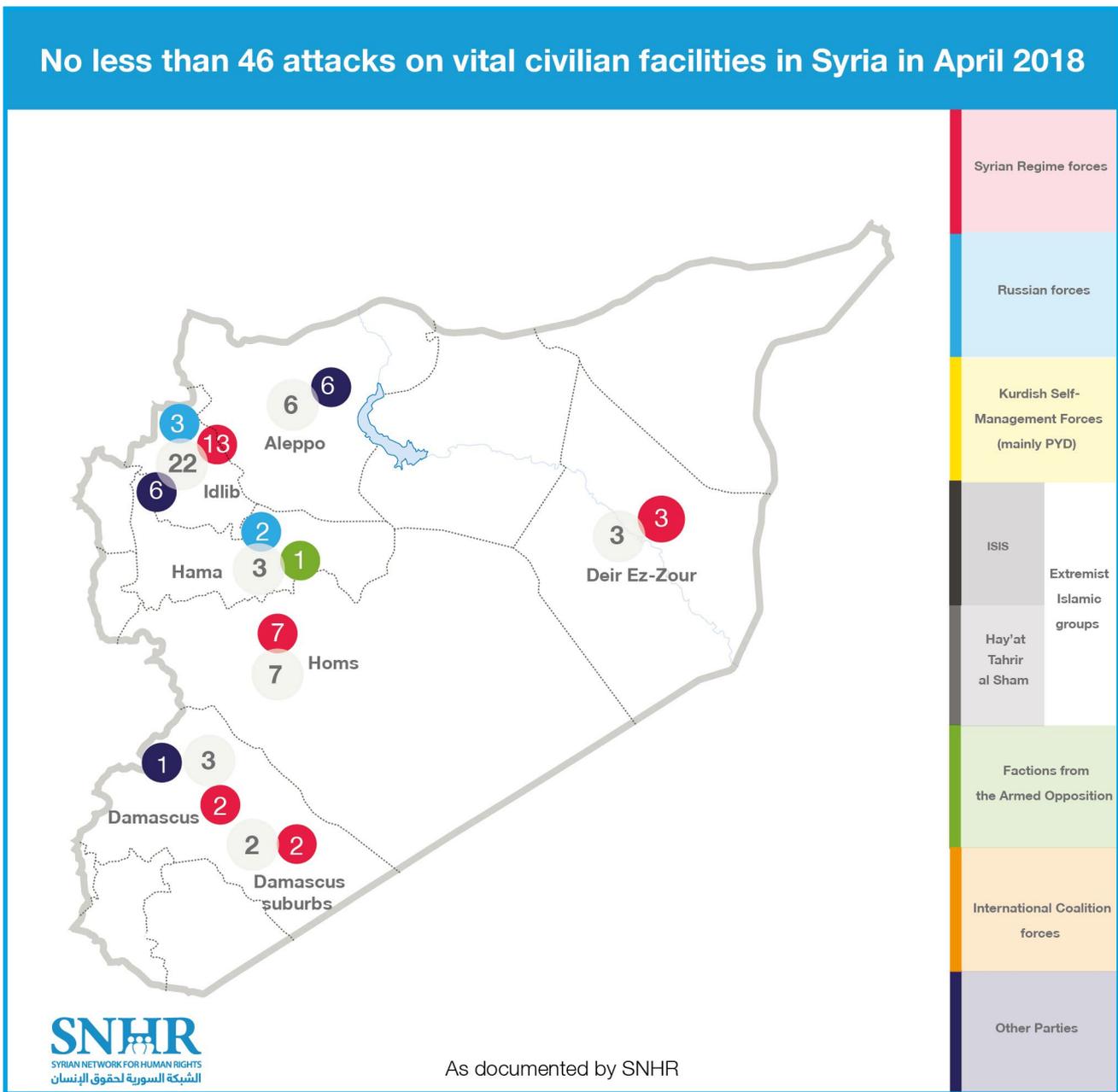


B. Most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities in April 2018

Through daily documentation and monitoring, we, at SNHR, have recorded no less than 46 attacks on vital civilian facilities in April 2018, distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:



Attacks on vital civilian facilities in April were distributed across governorates by the perpetrator party as follows:



- Most notable facilities that were attacked in April 2018:

Attacks on vital civilian facilities were distributed as follows

6 infrastructures, 9 places of worship, 10 vital medical facilities, 6 communal facilities, 10 vital educational facilities, 2 refugee camps, and three international humanitarian insignia



Distribution of Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities by the Perpetrator Party in April 2018				
Perpetrator Party	Syrian Regime Forces	Russian Forces	Factions from the Armed Opposition	Other Parties
Targeted Facility				
Places of Worship				
Mosques	5	1		3
Vital Educational Facilities				
Schools	9			
Orphanages				1
Vital Medical Facilities				
Medical Facilities	7	1		2
Communal Facilities				
Gardens				1
Markets	1	1		2
Malls				1
International Humanitarian Insignia				
Red Crescent	3			
Infrastructure				
Power Stations and Energy Sources			1	
Civil Defense Facilities		1		
Water Systems	1			
Official Headquarters				2
Industrial Facilities				1
Refugee Camps				
Refugee Camps	1	1		
Total	27	5	1	13



IV. Details of Most Notable Incidents in April 2018

This report outlines the most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities. We have the details of the complete incidents stored in SNHR's database.

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

Places of worship

- Mosques

Thursday, April 5, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired [one missile](#) at [al Rahman Mosque](#) in the middle of al Bara village, Jabal al Zawiya, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. [The mosque building](#) was [partially destroyed](#) and the furniture was heavily damaged, as the mosque was rendered out of commission. The village was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Saturday, April 21, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) fired a [number of missiles](#) at [Palestine Mosque](#) in al Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian Refugees in southern Damascus city. The mosque building was partially destroyed and its furniture was moderately damaged. The camp was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

Saturday, April 28, 2018, Syrian regime forces artillery fired a number of shells near al Har-rata Mosque in [al Sha'fa](#) city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The mosque building was moderately damaged. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



Vital educational facilities

- Schools

Wednesday, April 25, 2018, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of [barrel bombs](#) near [Tishreen School](#) for Elementary Education in al Gharbi neighborhood, [Kafr Sajna village](#), southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The school building was partially destroyed and its furniture was [moderately damaged](#). The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Saturday, April 28, 2018, Syrian regime forces artillery fired a number of shells at the 1st School for Girls in al Sha'fa city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The school building was moderately damaged. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

Sunday, April 29, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a number of missiles at Thu al Nourien School for Elementary Education in the center of [al Za'farana](#) village, northern suburbs of Homs governorate. The school building was partially destroyed, and its furniture and cladding materials were moderately damaged, as the school was rendered out of commission. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Communal facilities

- Markets

Tuesday, April 3, 2018, around 09:15, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes (MiG-21) fired a number of missiles at the [main market](#) in the middle of Ariha city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which [resulted in casualties](#). Additionally, a number of shops were [partially destroyed](#) while the market facilities were [heavily damaged](#). The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.





Destruction in the aftermath of a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes on the main market in the middle of Ariha city, Idlib – April 3, 2018

Refugee camps

Sunday, April 1, 2018, around 11:00, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes (Su-22) fired [a missile](#) near a shelter for Eastern Ghouta (eastern Damascus suburbs governorate) IDPs. The shelter was being constructed inside [a sports club](#) in northeastern [Ariha](#) city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. [A number of tents](#) were heavily damaged. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

B. Russian forces

Places of worship

- Mosques

Sunday, April 29, 2018, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired a missile at al Kabir Mosque in the center of [Ma'ar Zita](#) village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The mosque building was partially destroyed and its furniture was heavily damaged, as the mosque was rendered out of commission. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Refugee camps

Sunday, April 29, 2018, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired a number of missiles at [al Walid Camp](#) for IDPs in northwestern Ma'ar Zita village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in casualties. Additionally, the camp facilities were [heavily damaged](#), while [a school building](#), which was [constructed](#) inside the camp, was heavily damaged, as well as [its furniture](#). The school is a two-room, concrete construction. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Destruction in the school of al Walid Camp in the aftermath of a bombing by warplanes we believe were Russian who fired missiles at Ma'ar Zita village, Idlib – April 29, 2018

C. Factions from the armed opposition

Infrastructures

- Power stations

Monday, April 23, 2018, two shells landed on Mharda Thermal Station in [Mharda](#) city, western suburbs of Hama governorate. The shells' source, we believe, was an artillery stationed in an area held by factions from the armed opposition. One of the steam units, which feed Shezar Power Plant, was moderately damaged, as the power went off in the majority of the villages and towns in Hama suburbs which are supplied by Shezar Station. The city was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.



D. Other parties

Places of worship

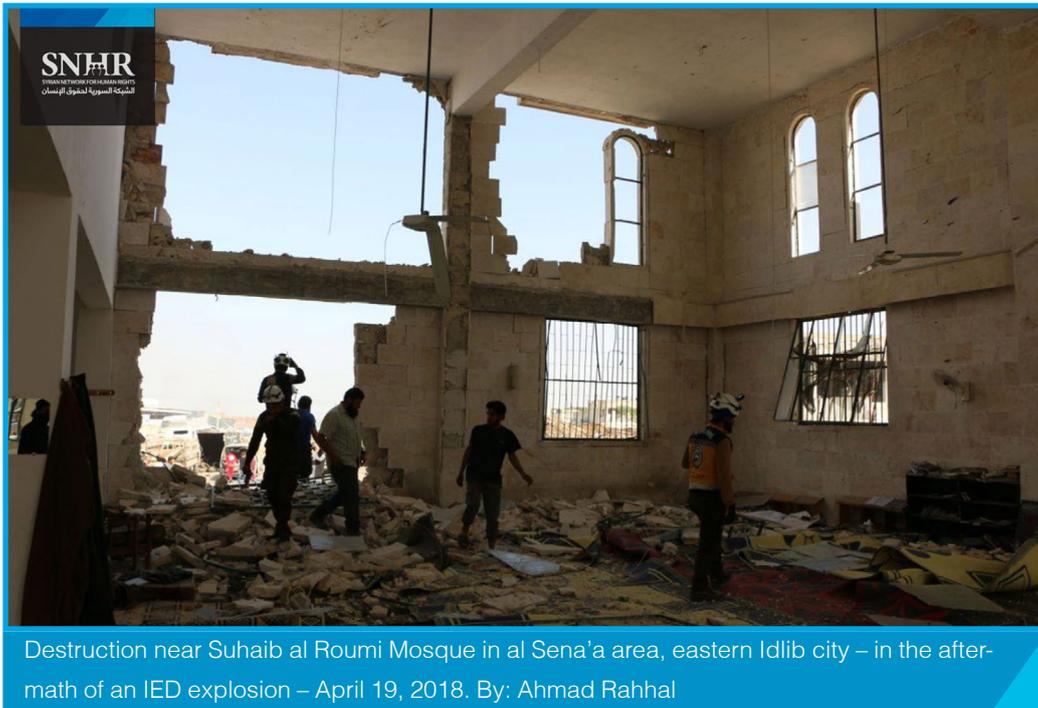
- Mosques

Saturday, April 7, 2018, around 15:30, an IED planted inside a car near [al Kabir Mosque](#) in the center of al Bab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, exploded 20 meters away from the mosque. The mosque building was moderately damaged. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing in light of the considerable difficulty in identifying the perpetrator in such bombing. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Thursday, April 19, 2018, a bombing occurred in front of Suhaib al Roumi Mosque in [al Sena'a area](#), eastern Idlib city. [The bombing](#) was likely caused by a car bomb. The mosque building was [heavily damaged](#), as it was [rendered out of commission](#). As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing in light of the [considerable difficulty](#) in identifying the perpetrator in such bombing. The city was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction near Suhaib al Roumi Mosque in al Sena'a area, eastern Idlib city – in the aftermath of an IED explosion – April 19, 2018. By: Ahmad Rahhal

Vital educational facilities

- Orphanages

Thursday noon, April 12, 2018, three IEDs planted inside a car near the orphanage in Izaz city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate exploded. The building front and its furniture were heavily damaged. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing in light of the considerable difficulty in identifying the perpetrator in such bombing. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Communal facilities

- Markets

Tuesday, April 24, 2018, a rocket shell landed on a local market in [Nahr Aisha](#) neighborhood, southern Damascus city, which resulted in casualties. In addition, a number of shops were heavily damaged. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the group behind the shelling. The neighborhood was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

- Malls

Friday, April 13, 2018, an IED planted in front of the mall backed by the Turkish Religious Endowment, known as the Charity Mall, exploded in the center of Idlib city. The mall building was moderately damaged. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing in light of the considerable difficulty in identifying the perpetrator in such bombing. The city was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Infrastructures

- Industrial facilities

Monday, April 9, 2018, an IED exploded in the [industrial area](#) in Hazra village, located in northern al Dana city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in casualties. Additionally, a number of industrial shops were partially destroyed and their equipment were heavily damaged. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing in light of the considerable difficulty in identifying the perpetrator in such bombing. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Damages in the aftermath of an IED bombing in the industrial area, Hazra village, Idlib – April 9, 2018

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Syrian regime and Russian forces

- Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be ceased.
- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted civilian objects. Therefore, Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces have violated Articles 52,53,54,55, and 56 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.
- The attacks mentioned in this report that were carried out by the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces, are considered a violation of the rules of the customary international humanitarian law (rules 7 through 10).



- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks, as well as the repeated targeting, must be based on high orders, and a state policy.

The Coalition (international coalition and SDF)

The attacks by Coalition forces have caused significant damages to civilian facilities. In most cases, these attacks have also resulted in losses that involved casualties or injuries. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Other forces

Factions from the armed opposition and other parties have carried out attacks that targeted civilian objects, which also resulted, in some cases, in loss of lives. These violations might qualify as war crimes. However, these violations don't qualify as crimes against humanity, as with the Syrian regime and pro-regime forces who carry out unlawful attacks in a systematic and widespread manner.

Recommendations

Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps after resolution 2139 and 2254 have been adopted, and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombing have been made. All parties to the conflict should respect these steps, and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- Expand sanctions to include the Syrian, Russian, and Iranian regimes who were directly involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.
- List the militias who are fighting on the side of the Syrian government and had committed wide massacres - such as Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, other Shiite groups, the National Defense Army, and Shabiha, on the international list of terrorist groups.
- Abstain from considering the Syrian government an official side after it perpetrated crimes against humanity with regard to the relief aspect, and stop giving it the largest portion of financial and other aids as they are being delivered to the people who support the Syrian government instead of people who are truly in-need.



International community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect them from the daily killing and siege and raise the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should 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 have been brought out as well as the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations should be taken and 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 the 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 work on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

OHCHR

The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents included in this report and the incidents that preceded, given that they are a glaring mark in a string of daily sporadic violations of a smaller scope. Also, the OHCHR should work on implementing the recommendations in this report.

Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the cases included in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

European Union and United States of America

Support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism that was established in



accordance with General Assembly Resolution 71/248, adopted on December 21, 2016. And establish local tribunals that enjoy a universal jurisdiction, and address the war crimes that were perpetrated in Syria.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations regarding the incidents that resulted in civilian casualties, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the people involved accountable.
- Compensate all affected facilities and centers, and reconstruct and rehabilitate them. Also, compensate all the victims' families, who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as the all the wounded.
- Immediately cease bombing hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect the customary international law.

The Coalition (international coalition forces and Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition have to unequivocally and truly acknowledge that some of the bombardment operations have targeted civilian objects, while some attacks resulted in the killing of innocent civilians. Instead of denying, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and those who were affected.
- The SDF-supporting states should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns that are under their control.
- All forms of support, weapons and otherwise, should be ceased until SDF commit to the previous recommendations. This is primarily the supporting states' responsibility. Providing SDF with weapons and support while knowing that they can be used in war crimes or crimes against humanity can be seen as a contribution to these crimes.

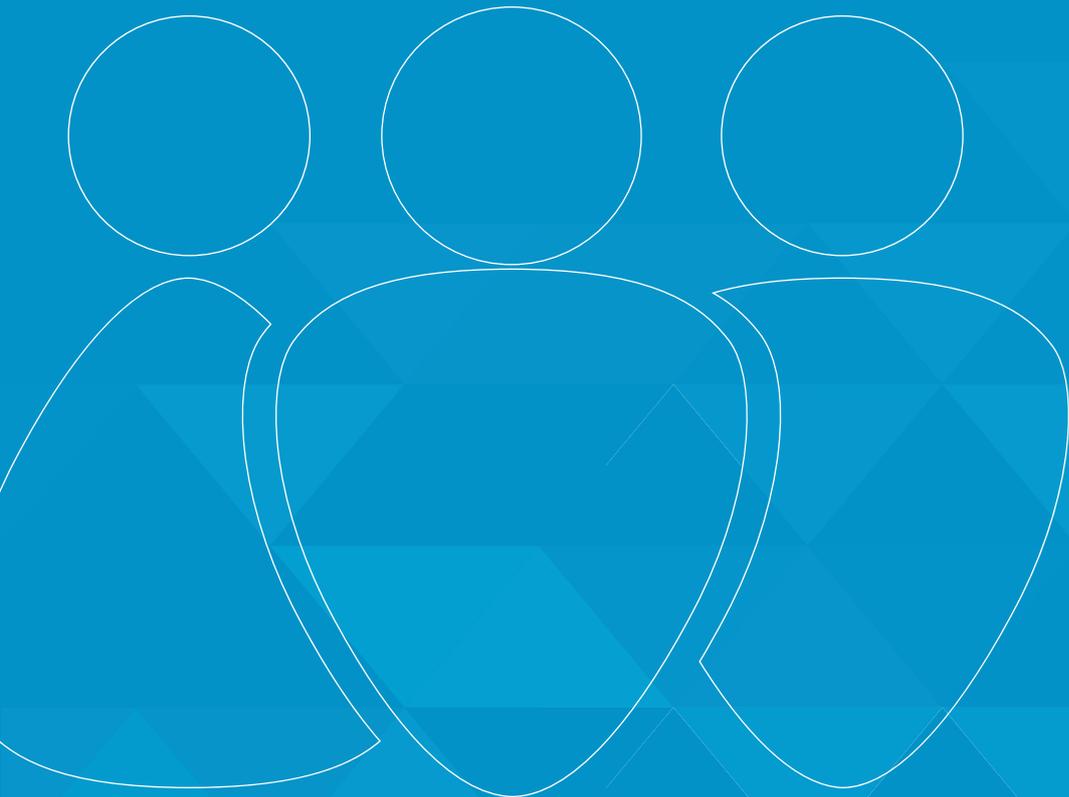
Armed opposition factions

Ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects in all of their areas of control. Also, armed opposition factions should launch investigations on the incidents included in this report.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We would like to thank and extend our most heartfelt condolences to all the residents and local activists who contributed effectively to this report.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

