



Allegedly Russian Warplanes Kills 104 Civilians,
including 25 children and 15 women

Syria's Sun Won't Rise From Moscow

The Syrian Network for Human Rights is a independent and non-governmental, non-profit human rights organization that investigates and documents all violations committed by all conflict parties involved in the Syrian conflict since 2011. The network, that does not adopt any ideology, was founded in June 2011 and aims to defend the human rights of the Syrian people. It also includes 27 researchers and human rights activists stationed in Syria and in other neighboring countries.

SNHR is committed to all standards and international conventions of Human Rights issued by the United Nations. It aims to ensure that victims' rights are not exploited and perpetrators are held accountable for their crimes.

SNHR issues periodic reports concerning the most notable daily violations, eight monthly statistical or specialized reports, annual reports, and reports concerning global human rights events. It also issues significant studies and documentaries on a regular basis in order to contribute to raising awareness in the Syrian community.

SNHR is considered to be one of the most distinguished and reliable sources of information and references for all the analytical and statistical studies issued by the United Nations.



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I. Introduction and Methodology:

On 30 September 2015, Russian forces commenced air strikes on Syria and announced that it will target extremist Islamic groups (i.e. ISIL, An-Nusra Front, and Jund Al Aqsa group). However, their actions on the ground contradicted statements made Russian officials. It seems that these air strikes deliberately killed civilians and targeted regions that were never under the control of extremist Islamic groups.

In this report, we focus on:

Targeted civilian and military regions under the control of armed opposition

Targeted civilian regions under the control of ISIL.

We excluded military targets on ISIL's areas due to the difficulty we face in verifying its occurrence.

Our team conducted interviews and investigations with residents, local activists and eyewitnesses. We analyzed footages and images we received and crossed referenced these outcomes with information about the air strikes from pro-Russian media outlets. We were able to distinguish the shelling pattern of the new Russian air strikes; as it has different destructive power, warplanes' sound, and weapons.

We faced a number of challenges while conducting this study; the most notable difficulties were that the Syrian regime uses Russian made weapons and ammunition. Therefore, among all the shelling incidents, we were able to verify only 23 attacks that we think were alleged to be Russian. However, we are still keen on authenticating these facts to reach the highest degrees of certainty. Among the interviews we conducted, we included 9 testimonies and informed the eyewitnesses of the interviews' aims. However, the eyewitnesses' names shall remain confidential for the safety of eyewitnesses. This report documents the Russian air-strikes since it began on 30 September 2015 and until 6 October 2015.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, head of SNHR says:

"The Russian regime has been involved in suppressing the uprising in Syria by supplying weapons to the Syrian regime and in supporting it in international and political forums, even though it was proven by International Investigation Committee that the Syrian regime committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against its own people. Now, the Russian regime has joined other conflict parties in Syria and violated the International Humanitarian Law. By this means, we accuse the Russian regime of committing crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria."

II. Executive Summary:

SNHR classified the 23 alleged Russian attacks as follows:

A. Regions under the control of armed opposition:

18 attacks were perpetrated in regions under the control of armed opposition, detailed as follows:

- 15 attacks on civilian targets
- 3 attacks on military targets

B. Regions under ISIL's control:

SNHR documented 5 attacks on civilian regions in ISIL-controlled regions.

According to SNHR documentation, these attacks killed 104 civilians, including 25 children and 15 women and targeted four vital facilities: A medical region, two mosques, and a center for distributing bread.

This means that for every 15 civilian targets in armed opposition areas, 5 civilian regions were targeted in ISIL-controlled regions; which means that regions controlled by armed opposition were targeted three times more than ISIL controlled regions. Russia claims that it is fighting ISIL, extremists and terrorism; however, it shells civilian regions and regions controlled by armed opposition. Therefore, in this context, Russia is supporting ISIL and thus supporting terrorism against the Syrian people.

III- Details about the Russian Air-Strikes

A. Regions under the control of armed opposition:

• Civilian Targets:

1. Talbisa City in Homs governorate: 30 September 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled residential complexes and civil institutions in Talbisa. As a result, the commission headquarters for distributing bread in the city was shelled. 17 individuals died, including 3 children, a woman and one member from the Civil Defense.

It is worth noting that Talbisa city is free from an ISIL presence whereas its nearest headquarters is 50 Km away from the city.

Abo Baraa Al Homs, a local activist in northern Homs suburbs told SNHR his testimony:

“We confirmed that the warplanes which launched the air strikes were Russian though satellite observatories and from the intensity of the explosions, compared to the Syrian regime’s shelling. At 10 a.m. the Russian warplanes targeted the residential neighborhoods and the bread-distributing center in Talbisa. Civil Defense teams tried to pull the victims’ bodies from under the rubble. A dead body was found a week later due to the shelling intensity and the great destruction it caused.”

A [video](#) that depicts the alleged Russian shelling aftermath on Talbisa – Homs:

An [image](#) that portrays the shelling aftermath from the alleged Russian shelling on Talbisa city in Homs on 30 September 2015:



An [image](#) that depicts injured individuals due to the Russian warplane shelling:

2. Al Rastan City in Homs governorate: 30 September 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Al Rastan city with rockets that killed 8 individuals, including 4 children and a woman. Not less than 20 individuals were injured.

SNHR interviewed Mr. Abu Wael from Al Rastan city:

“On Wednesday September 30, 2015, a reconnaissance aircraft was hovering at a high altitude then two aircrafts shelled the southern region of Al Rastan city with four rockets. As a result, 7 civilians were killed and 20 others were injured amongst which a number of injuries involved amputations. It is a civilian region and free of any armed opposition presence in a diameter of 5 Km, as it is also free of ISIL presence.

We noticed difference between two patterns of shelling, i.e. the Syrian regime and the Russian one. Usually Russian warplanes are accompanied first with reconnaissance planes, but the Syrian ones usually shell regions without these planes or it is preceded by it. Also, shelling by Russian warplanes is more intense and causes greater destruction than the Syrian regime shelling.

SNHR spoke to a defected Major, Mohamad Ali Ayoub, from Al Rastan city, who informed us about the way they were able to distinguish the Russian shelling from the Syrian one:

“Russians have more advanced warplanes than the Syrian regime. Their warplanes can fly on such high altitudes between 4.5 and 5 Km before they drop thermal balloons so that they won't be targeted by anti-aircraft warfare, and therefore can shell regions without having to fly at lower altitudes like the Syrian government warplanes do. Syrian warplanes would fly at low altitudes before it start to shell. Moreover, Russian warplanes fly in swarms of at least two warplanes and always followed by reconnaissance planes, however; the Syrian regime only uses one warplane at a time that launches a number of air strikes then leaves the shelled area.

Finally, the rockets' type is different in terms of severity of the blast it causes as it does not explode until it reaches the ground after hitting a high story building which in turn leads to more human life loss and damages.”

3. Al Za'afaraneh town in Homs governorate: 30 September 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled residential neighborhoods in the center of Al Za'afaraneh town which killed 15 individuals, including two children and 5 women.

[Images](#) that depicts the shelling aftermath in the town



SNHR spoke to local activist Mahmoud Al Issa who told us his testimony:

“On Wednesday, at 11:00 a.m Russian warplanes shelled civilian houses in the center of Al Za'afaraneh town with two rockets. The attack damaged five houses.” We were able to identify the shelling as a Russian one through the intensity of the shelling and the severity of the damages it caused and it flies in swarms of at least two warplanes.”

4. Al Makrmeya town in Homs governorate: 30 September 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled a house in Al Makrameya town that is under the control of armed opposition. As a result, one civilian was killed.

5. Jisr Al Shughour city in Idlib governorate: 30 September 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque in Jisr Al Shoughour city, killed one individual and destroyed the mosque completely.

A [video](#) that depicts the shelling aftermath on the mosque:

6. Al Habeet town in Idlib governorate: 1 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Al Habeet town in Idlib southern suburbs. We recorded the death of two children due to the shelling.

An [image](#) for a child who died due to the shelling on Al Habeet town:

4. Blayoun town in Idlib governorate: 1 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Blayoun town in Idlib which killed 6 civilians, including a child and two women. The town is under the control of armed opposition in partnership with An-Nusra front.

5. Khan Shaykhoun city in Idlib governorate: 1 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled the western neighborhood of Khan Shaykhoun city, next to Al Seyasa building. It is worth nothing that An-Nusra front took this building as a headquarters; however it evacuated it since the beginning of September 2015.

6. Jebel Al Turkman region in Lattakia: 2 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled the headquarters for the First Coastal Squad that is affiliated to armed opposition in the northwest of Jebel Al Turkman. Through our investigations we realized that the headquarters was used as sheltering center for displaced residents that was supervised, organized and protected by armed opposition.

7. Ihsim town in Idlib governorate: 3 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled a house next to a poultry farm in Ihsim town and Orient medical region which destroyed it.

We recorded the death of 6 individuals including 3 children, a woman and a Civil Defense member.

SNHR interviewed local activist Kasem Abu Nizar from Ihsim town who told us his testimony:

“At 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, Russian warplanes launched four airstrikes on Ihsim town in Jabal Al Zawiya in Idlib suburbs. The raids targeted the poultry farm in the town as it was shelled with 10 rockets. The first and second raids shelled three rockets, and the third and fourth raids shelled two rockets at a time.”



An [image](#) that depicts Issam Al Saleh, the civil defense member who died due to the shelling

SNHR interviewed local activist Ibrahim Al Shemali in southern Idlib suburbs:

“Through our observation we concluded that when the Russian warplanes are launching the attacks, it prevent the Syrian regime warplanes from hovering around. A day before the shelling, a reconnaissance plane monitored the region, and then on the massacre’s day, two warplanes were hovering around. One of the warplanes launched a vacuum rocket on the poultry farm in Ihsim’s periphery. It launched another raid on the same region which killed two members from the Civil Defense.”

An [image](#) that depicts the shelling aftermath on Ihsim town:

A [video](#) that depicts the shelling remnants:

8. Jisr Al Shoughour city in Idlib governorate: 4 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Skeef town in Jisr Al Shoughour city which killed an individual and damaged the mosque’s building.

9. Granada town in Homs: 4 October 2015:

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled civilian neighborhoods in Granada town that belongs to Talbisa city. The shelling killed two individuals.

10. Um Sharshouh town in Homs: 4 October 2015:

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled civilian neighborhoods in Um Sharshouh city that belongs to Al Rastan city. The shelling killed one individual.

SNHR interviewed local activist Abu Baraa Al Homs, from Homs northern suburbs:

“On 4 October 2015, Russian warplanes launched a number of air-strikes on Granada and Um Sharhouh towns in western of Al Rastan city. The strikes targeted civilian targets as usual. A number of individuals were killed and injured. All the targeted locations were civilian and free of any ISIL presence in northern Homs suburbs.”

11. Akrab town in Hama governorate: 3 October 2015:

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled a road that connects Al Houla town (in Homs suburbs) and Akrab town (in Hama suburbs) that is under the control of armed opposition. Two rockets, which contained cluster bombs, were shelled and killed two civilians, including a child. Also, partial damages occurred to residential buildings.



[Images](#) that depict aiding [injured](#) individuals.

SNHR interviewed local activist Mohannad Al Bakour:

“At 1:30 p.m. warplanes raided Al Houla region in Homs suburbs and Akrab town in Hama suburbs. The road between Al Houla and Akrab was shelled with two rockets loaded with cluster bombs which injured two individuals, amongst which a child who became blind due to the cluster bomb shelling. The warplanes were flying on higher altitudes, unlike the Syrian regime ones. The warplanes shelled the targets without having to fly at lower altitudes like the regime does, that’s how we were sure that it was Russian warplanes. Also, the shelling remnants were unlike what we were used to see when the Syrian regime would bombard us. Four cluster bombs from the two-rocket shelling with left unexploded and FSA dismantled it by shooting at it from a very long range. The Russian aerial strikes were accompanied with shelling from rocket launchers by the Syrian regime, where almost 30 rockets were shelled by them.”

Images that depict the unexploded cluster bombs which were dismantled by armed opposition:



12. Knasfara town in Idlib: 6 October 2015:

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled the agricultural lands in Knasfara town. Residents told us that all military headquarters were vacant of any military presence for armed opposition. Also, we documented some damages in the agricultural lands and houses in the town.

- **Military Targets:**

1. Al Yamdeya region in Lattakia suburbs: 1 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled joint military headquarters between armed opposition and An-Nusra front on the Turkish borders between Idlib and Lattakia suburbs. The headquarters were ammunition warehouses and training centers for armed opposition.

2. Kafar Halap town in Aleppo governorate: 4 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Kafar Halap town with rockets loaded with cluster bombs in Aleppo western suburbs that is under the control of armed opposition. The shelling targeted two headquarters for Sukhour Al Jabal Brigade which led injuries among the armed opposition group.

An image that depicts the cluster munitions remnants that were shelled by the Russian warplanes on Kafar Halap:



An image that depicts the shelling on Kafar Halap town



Images taken by local activists that depicts the use of new kind of cluster munitions which we have not recorded before in our previous reports



3. Kafar Aweed town in Idlib: 6 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled a building northern of Kafar Aweed town in Idlib which belonged to Ahrar Al Sham, an armed opposition group. The building was used as a housing place for Ahrar Al Sham members after it has been emptied from ammunition since August 2015. The shelling destroyed the building and ruined almost 100 olive trees.

SNHR interviewed local activist Ibrahim Al Shimali:

“On Tuesday the agricultural lands in northern of Kafar Aweed town were shelled with eight rockets launched by two Russian warplanes that were hovering around in the same direction. The shelling targeted a small and empty military headquarters used as housing for armed opposition members. The two-room headquarters was vacant more than a month ago. However, the warplanes shelled the agricultural lands in Knasfara town which was also free of any military presence for armed opposition since Russians started their air strikes. The agricultural lands and some houses on the town’s periphery were damaged.

It seemed that the Syrian government had a great number of information delivered to the Russians, as the Syrian regime targeted the previously shelled locations. However, the Russian warplanes were not able to target the headquarters with any of its eight rockets.

Most of the headquarters that were targeted by the Russians in northern Hama suburbs and southern Idlib suburbs were for the Free Syrian Army, and some of it was for Ahrar Al Sham. There was no ISIL presence in the region, as it is known that ISIL is only present in the eastern region of Syria.”

Regions under ISIL’s control:

• Civilian Targets:

1. Al Bab city in Aleppo city: 2 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled the vegetables market in Al Bab city. We recorded the death of 19 civilians including 2 children and a woman. A number of individuals were injured as well; several shops and cars were burned.

2. Deir Hafer town in Aleppo: 2 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled the town’s market. We documented the death of 6 individuals including 3 children. Not less than 10 others were injured and several shops were damaged as well.

3. Al Bab city in Aleppo: 5 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled commercial shops next to Al Naser mosque in Al Bab city which killed 6 civilians. Not less than 20 others were injured and several shops were shelled as well.

4. Al Wadi Al Ahmar region in Palmyra city in Homs: 6 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled Al Wadi Al Ahmar agricultural region in north-east of Palmyra city that is under ISIL's control. We recorded the death of two Bedouin families. The victims' numbers reached 14 civilians including 5 children and four women.

5. Al Qaryatayn city in Homs: 6 October 2015

Allegedly Russian warplanes shelled residential neighborhoods in the city which destroyed an entire neighborhood; therefore, several individuals were injured.

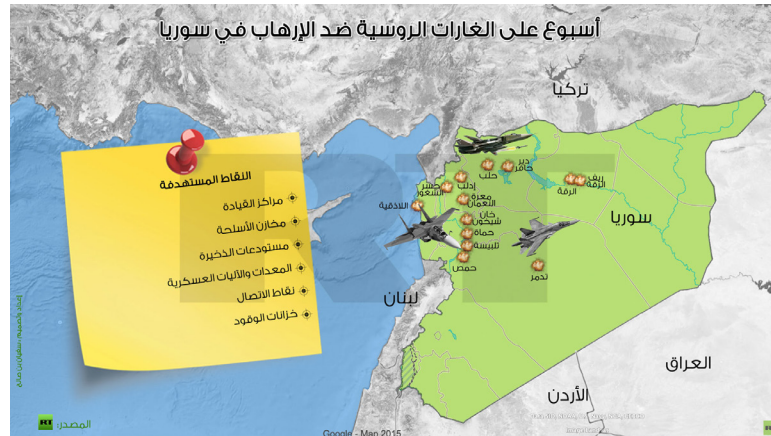
IV- Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. Russian forces should abide by the International Humanitarian Law, and therefore responsible for these violations since the beginning of the attacks, which were mentioned through this report. Russia must bear the consequences of all these violations, and avoid its recurrence.
2. Indiscriminate bombardment is considered a clear violation of the International Humanitarian Law, and these indiscriminate killings amount to war crimes.
3. It is necessary to protect civilians from the brutality of the Syrian regime and extremist militias allied with them. A no-fly zone must be established in parallel with the protecting civilians in Syria from the brutality of ISIL.

V-Attachments:

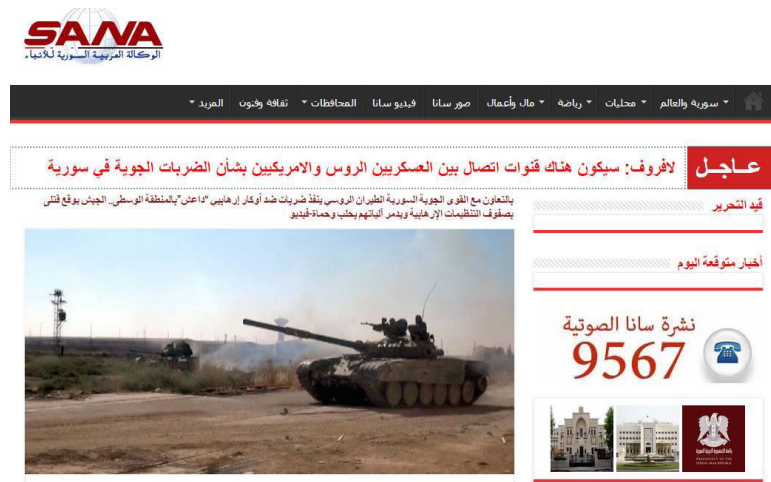
A [report](#) for Russia Today channel about the Russian air strikes on Jisr Al Shoughour, Al Rastan, Hama, Homs, and Lattakia:

An info-graphic image for Russia Today channel that depicts the location of the Russian air-strikes since 30 September 2015 and up till 7 October 2015:



A “Su-24Ms” Russian warplane that targeted ISIL location

An image taken from SANA website that confirms the shelling of Russian warplanes on Talbisa and Al Rastan cities in Homs



Acknowledgment

Our thanks and appreciations go to the victims’ families, eyewitnesses, and local activists whose testimonies contributed majorly to this report. Our most profound consolations go out to the victims’ families and friends.