

Syria without Mosques

A report prepared by: The Syrian Network for Human Rights ([SNHR](#))

The scope of the report: Documenting the shelling and destructing of Awais Al Qurani mosque in Assukkari district in Aleppo on Tuesday, December, 24, 2013

Introduction:

A link that shows the location of Assukkari district

[SNHR](#) issued a comprehensive report on June, 6, 2013 that documents the systematic destruction of mosques in different Syrian governorates through arbitrary and deliberate shelling by the government forces. We documented more than 1451 mosques, in that report, which were destroyed either completely or partially.

After that report, government forces continued targeting and destroying mosques. Massive acts of shelling on Aleppo by barrel bombs have damaged big number of mosques.

We mention here that big number of mosques is used as schools, in addition to its original role as a place of worship. That was so because arbitrary and deliberate shelling by the government forces put more than 3874 schools out of service, according to a previous report by [SNHR](#). In addition to that, some Al Qaeda-affiliated groups use schools as bases for them. The same is done by some groups from the armed opposition.

The methodology of this report is based on field visits conducted by the team of [SNHR](#) to Aleppo, where the team met civilians who survived the shelling on their areas. Please note that the names of the eyewitnesses have been changed according to their own will.

[For more details on the methodology of SNHR in documenting victims](#)

The Details of the Incident:

Air force of the Syrian government dropped 3 barrel bombs in the surrounding of Awais Al Qurani mosque that was turned into an elementary school. After that raid, the military jets returned and hit the mosque with a missile. Three children were killed; more than ten injured. [SNHR](#) met with eyewitness Hasan Sabbagh, who was in the targeted area. He offered us his testimony:

“At about 9 am, we were awakened on the sounds of huge explosions that were caused by, as we found out, three barrel bombs that the military jets dropped them. One barrel targeted a residential building close to Al Ikhlas mosque; another close to the shop of Rashid Darbuk. The third fell close to Fatema mosque. After that, a missile fell targeting Awais Al Qurani mosque, putting it into fire. I went quickly to the targeted area and helped rescuing a nine years old child. Her leg was injured.

I saw civilians rally to the place to save their children. Thank Allah the number of injures was little since most of the families abstained from sending their children to study in the mosque, as Aleppo was hugely being shelled by barrel bombs at that time.”

Fadel Abdul Ghani, the head of [SNHR](#) said:

“It was proved to us that most of the government forces shelling don’t serve military ends. It is a deliberate punishment for civilians. Shelling usually causes lots of killings and wide destruction. It is a shelling that doesn’t distinguish between protected places and other ones.”

[SNHR](#) met with eyewitness Hasan Sabbagh, who was in the area during shelling:

“In the morning of December, 24, 2013 I was in Al Ansari district, close to Al Sikkari area. After many barrel bombs were dropped on the area I went to my family to make sure they are ok. I passed through the street in which Awais Al Qurani mosque is located. I noticed a state of chaos in the place and two ambulance cars leaving quickly. There was a fire car as well trying to put down the fire. I asked the people there about what has happened. They told me that a missile hit the mosque. There was a family (the father, the mother and one youth) who were trying to penetrate through the fire to enter the mosque to look for their child who was studying in the mosque just before the shelling. I saw an injured child who was saved by medical workers. I saw the body of a ten years old child. She was laid and covered in the street. People were coming to her and trying to recognize her. There was a great destruction in the mosque and the halls that were turned into a school. They were destroyed completely.”

Appendixes and Attachments:

First: The Names and Pictures of Victims:

The team of [SNHR](#) could document the killing of three children:

Child Mihammad Razzouk, 14 years old, Aleppo, Al Sikkari, died because of the shelling by barrel bombs.

Child Yusra Mahmud Hammada, female, 10 years old, Aleppo, Al Sikkari, died because of the shelling by barrel bombs.

Child Marwa Mahmud Hammada, female, 14 years old, Aleppo, Al Sikkari, died because of the shelling by barrel bombs.

Second: Pictures of the destruction that happened in the mosque:

[Pic 1](#)

[Pic 2](#)

[Pic 3](#)

Legal Conclusions:

Note that the Syrian regime has committed a war-crime related to property destruction crime as covered by the 1949 Geneva Convention where these actions committed in non-international armed conflict and it was civilian target.

1. [SNHR](#) affirms that the shelling on the mosque was arbitrary and targeted armless civilians; thus the government forces and militias have violated the articles of the international law for human rights which guarantee the right to live.

Furthermore these violations were pretreated during a non-international armed conflict which can be classified as war crimes.

2. [SNHR](#) thinks that this is a crime against humanity because it is not the first of its kind; rather, it became a daily practice that includes all the Syrian governorates. It is a comprehensive style used by the Syrian government.

3. The random attacks committed by the government forces are considered violations of the norms of the international humanitarian law given that the government forces attacked residential areas rather than a specific military target.

4. These attacks, especially air strikes, have caused casual losses whether it was killing civilian victims, wounding them, or causing severe damage to civilian properties. There are strong indicators shows that the damage was deeply severe compared to the expected military advantage.

5. The magnitude of this wide systematic frequent shelling, the level of its excessive strength, its military nature, and the coordinated approach of the attacks must be based on high orders, and a state policy.

Recommendations:

Human Rights Council:

- Considering attacks that occurred in Syria on the sanctity of the mosques as violation on the basic human rights that affect his sanctities and dignity
- Denounce violations committed by Syrian Government's Armed Forces such as warship houses, mosques and churches, and document those attacks
- Pressure on the Syrian Government's Armed Troops and formally request to stop its violations on mosques
- Hold alias and supporters of the Syrian Government's Armed Troops (support with weapons and gear) to take clear positions on those violations and make diplomatic and political pressure to stop and end these violations

Arab League:

- Denounce violations of warship houses and churches, and document those attacks
- Pressure regionally and internationally to make effective decisions in this regard
- Pressure on the Syrian regime to stop those violations that affect Muslims all around the world
- Demand the states that can effect on Alassad regime to make it stop deliberate and widespread violations on churches.

Security Council:

- Denounce violations of warship houses and churches, and criminalized those attacks
- Issue a binding decision against Syrian regime to stop all violations, specifically warship houses and churches
- Warning of the consequences of such violations for social peace and led for sectarian and religious wars, and hold Syrian Government's full responsibility about it
- Announce demand to protect churches and Archeological places and warning of endangerment them

