

# Even IDPs weren't Safe from the Syrian Regime's Attacks in Daraa City

Nine Civilians Killed, Including Three Children and one Fetus

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



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### I. Introduction

Daraa city follows administratively Daraa governorate, and it is located 125 kilometers to the south of Damascus the capital. The city saw the very first demonstrations against the Syrian regime that ushered the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011.

The city has been under the control of armed opposition factions since early-2012, except for al Manshiya and Sajna neighborhoods which the Syrian regime kept. On February 21, 2017, armed opposition factions started a battle to take over al Manshiya neighborhood. In retaliation, the Syrian-Russian alliance intensified its missile and barrel bomb strikes on the neighborhood, causing the displacement of no less than 6000 civilians to Um al Mayathin, Nasib, and al Jiza towns, while some others headed for the southern plains in al Shayyah area, which are about two kilometers away from Jordanian borders, and 10 kilometers from the center of Daraa city.





Aerial image showing the great destruction in the aftermath of the intensified heavy campaign in Daraa. Above: image taken in February 2017. Bottom: image taken in May 2017. Source: Qalaat Al Mudiq

SNHR team contacted a number of the city residents, eyewitnesses, and survivors, in addition to local media activists. This report includes two accounts. We have explained the purpose of these interviews for the eyewitnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR tried to spare them the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible. We also gave insurances to conceal the identify of any witnesses who preferred to use an alias.

Additionally, we reviewed the pictures and videos we received and verified their authenticity. These pictures showed the great destruction that resulted from the bombardment, in addition to pictures showing children victims. We have copies of all the pictures and videos that are included in this report in a secret online database, and backup copies on hard drives. For more information, please read our general work [methodology](#).



The investigations in this report showed that the targeted areas are civilian areas, where no military bases or weapon warehouses for armed opposition factions or extremist Islamic groups were found before or during the attack. Also, Syrian regime forces didn't issue a warning for the civilians prior to the attack, as the international humanitarian law requires.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the magnitude and severity of the violation that occurred, which we have been able to document. In addition, this report doesn't cover the social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

## II. Details

Sunday, April 30, 2017, around 12:00, three Syrian regime helicopters soared over al Shayyah area, before dropping 10 barrel bombs on an IDPs residential gathering in al Khawabi, southern al Shayyah area, which resulted in the killing of nine civilians, including three children, one fetus, and two women (adult female). Additionally, 10 others were injured and residences were heavily damaged.

Al Shayyah area houses over 1000 IDPs from Daraa city who live in residences that were built to take in IDPs from Daraa areas.

Apparently, Syrian regime forces deliberately targeted civilian IDPs, as the massacre was preceded by a mortar shelling that targeted the vicinity of al Shayyah area. The shelling lasted intermittently from 07:00 until 13:00.





Mohammad al Maidani, a member of the Syrian civil defense, whom we talked with via WhatsApp, told us that he was at the civil defense base around 12:00, when the observatory announced that Syrian regime helicopters are soaring south of the city: “I saw three Syrian regime helicopters that were flying on the same track. They headed for the border areas in the south, and even broke into the Jordanian air as it seems to me. They dropped a number of barrel bombs. Even though I saw the barrel bombs, I didn’t hear the barrel bombs exploding.”



Mohammad went to the place where the barrel bombs were dropped in al Shayyah area, and told us of what he saw such as the victims' dead bodies and the damaged buildings: "I saw a man on the ground after he was killed by a shrapnel from the barrel bombs, and a pregnant lady who died along with her unborn child. We helped the wounded and came back to check the area. That was after nearly 20 minutes. As we got there, Syrian regime forces targeted us again with rocket launchers. Thank God no one was hurt."

Mohammad confirmed that the targeted areas were residences that were built for the IDPs, where there are no weapon warehouses or military bases that belong to the opposition.

Abu Omar Qtiefan told us that he saw three helicopters, and each one dropped four barrel bombs. The time gap between each dropping was no more than 30 seconds. At the time, Abu Omar was less than kilometers away from the location of the dropping: "I filmed a [video](#) of the moment of the first four barrel bombs' explosions that were dropped by the helicopter. I was able to pinpoint the targeted area, and I knew that a big massacre will go down because the area is crowded who escaped the Syrian regime's bombing in Daraa al Balad. After civil defense and paramedics arrived, Syrian regime targeted the area again with mortar shells and rocket launchers to kill and wound as many people as possible."

Two media activists told SNHR that some families fled al Shayyah area in the south, in light of the bombing, and set up a temporary camp out of fear of being targeted again.



A female child victim who was killed in airstrikes by Syrian regime forces in al Shayyah area, south of Daraa – April 30, 2017





Destruction in the residences of al Shayyah area after the airstrikes by Syrian regime forces – April 30, 2017

### III. Attachments

#### Victims' names



[Pictures of victims](#), including [children](#), who were [killed](#) in airstrikes by [Syrian regime forces](#) in [al Shayyah area](#) – April 30, 2017

[Video](#) showing children victims who were killed in airstrikes by Syrian regime forces in al Shayyah area – April 30, 2017



## IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

### Legal conclusions

- 1- The Syrian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, they violated Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.
- 2- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted armless civilians. Therefore, Syrian forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which amount to a war crime where all elements were fulfilled.
- 3- The attacks mentioned in this report, which were carried out by the Syrian regime, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area rather than a specific military object.
- 4- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, and significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

### Recommendations

#### The Security Council

The Security Council has to take additional steps as Resolution 2139 has been adopted and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombardment operations have been made. All the parties to the conflict must respect the Resolutions and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.

The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.

Instill security and peace in Syria and implement the norm of the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect the lives, culture, and history of the Syrian people from being destroyed, looted, and ruined.

Expand the sanctions to include the Syrian and Iranian regimes who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.



## **The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Office must submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on this massacre specifically considering that it is a glaring sign in a string of daily, sporadic and less significant massacres. The OHCHR also should work on implementing the recommendations included in this report.

## **The European Union and the United States of America**

Support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism that was established in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 248/71 that was adopted on December 21, 2016. And establish local tribunals that enjoy a universal jurisdiction, and work on the war crimes that were perpetrated in Syria.

## **The International Community**

In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, Steps must be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect them from the daily killing and siege and enhance the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction must be activated in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.

SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in tens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were drought out. Therefore, steps under Article 7 of the Rome Statute must be taken and the norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, must be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.

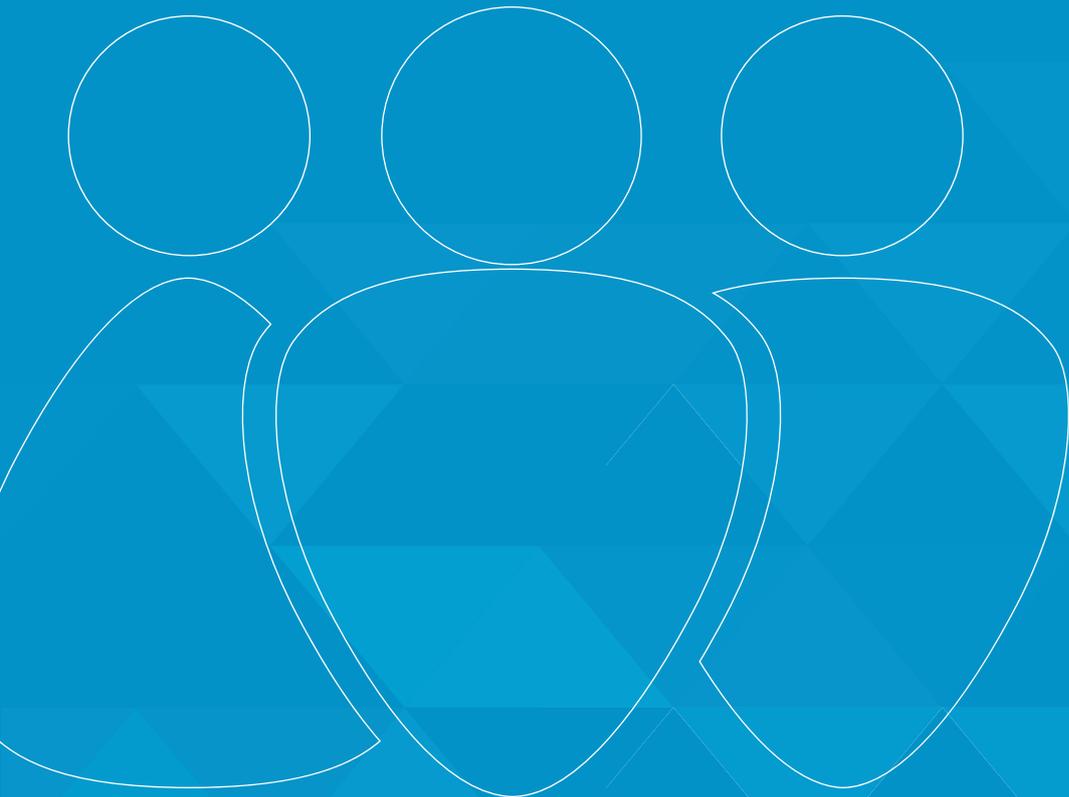
Renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court

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.

## **Acknowledgment and Condolences**

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





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