

Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Target 24 Medical Facilities in the Fourth De-Escalation Zone Within Four Weeks

After the Security Council Fails to
Protect Civilians, an International
Coalition Is Essential Outside the
Security Council to Protect Hospitals

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

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

The lengthy history of modern conflicts since the Second World War has never witnessed anything like the deliberate and repeated targeting of medical facilities and units by the Syrian regime and its allies, who have adopted this as a comprehensive central strategy aimed at terrorizing the people and spreading panic and fear among them, displacing them and forcing them to flee. Through using this policy, even when the Syrian regime is unable to seize control of areas, bombing their medical facilities and units helps it to make life very difficult or impossible in areas outside its control, sending a clear message to Syrian society that the only alternative to accepting the regime's subjugation is inevitable annihilation.

The failure of the United Nations' mechanisms to take any action to force the Syrian regime to stop bombing the protected hospitals and facilities, the inability of the Security Council to act due to the Russian veto, and the failure to create an international coalition responsible for protecting civilians and medical and civilian facilities, have all contributed to enabling the Syrian regime and its allies to continue with their barbaric strategy of targeted bombing of medical facilities. As the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) team has observed



over the past eight years and up to the present moment, the targeting of medical facilities is carried out calculatingly and deliberately, with regime intelligence services first conducting operations to locate field hospitals, private hospitals or even mobile medical units with the aim of bombing them. We have noted on many occasions the bombardment of buildings or streets around hospitals in attempts to hit the hospitals directly. We also recorded the targeting of medical centers on a number of occasions, which is evidence of the obsessive desire to annihilate all medical facilities.

Over the past eight years, SNHR has been particularly interested in documenting violations against medical personnel and the targeting of medical facilities, detailing these attacks in periodic monthly reports and through extensive reports and research. We have confirmed, through documenting and archiving evidence of these attacks, that Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces are the primary perpetrators of these violations, mainly because of their use of air power, which has led to the partial or total destruction of medical centers and field hospitals, medical equipment, stores of medicines and generators which feed these facilities, causing the closure of these health care facilities, temporarily or permanently, as well as leaving hundreds of wounded or injured affected.

Since the entry into force of the Sochi Agreement on September 17, 2018, which included the Idlib de-escalation zone (consisting of Idlib governorate and parts of the governorates of Hama, Aleppo and Latakia), the Idlib area has witnessed a repeated military escalation addressed in [several reports](#) by SNHR. These military campaigns have resulted in the deaths of at least 701 civilians, including 201 children and 131 women (adult female) at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces, and the displacement of nearly one million civilians, hundreds of thousands of whom have been displaced more than once.

On April 26, 2019, the area witnessed the most violent campaign since the Sochi Agreement, and we issued [a report](#) on its details and consequences. Up to May 24, this campaign resulted in the deaths of at least 265 civilians, including 64 children, and 50 women (adult female), and the displacement of at least 195,000 people. This escalation included a rise in the frequency of attacks on vital civilian facilities, especially medical centers; this has forced the management of most of the medical centers in the southern suburbs of Idlib and the northern suburbs of Hama to suspend their work, resulting in a growing inability to meet the most basic needs of the people in those areas; which forced them to move to the far north of Syria, where the majority of them remain without shelter, living in the open and in the orchards or in primitive makeshift tents. The remaining medical organizations operating in the area have been overwhelmed, being unable to cover the massive level of need for even basic medical services, especially after the suspension of funding organizations by a large number of states and donors in the area controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham which is classified as a terrorist party.



On May 10, the Security Council held an emergency closed-door meeting at the invitation of Germany, Kuwait and Belgium. The Deputy Russian Ambassador to the United Nations, Vladimir Safronkov, subsequently announced that Russia had blocked a statement from being released at the end of the meeting. The meeting did not issue any action or even a condemnation of the killings, bombardment, displacement and targeting of medical facilities. On May 13, the governments of the United Kingdom, France and Germany expressed in [a statement](#) their concern at the escalation of hostilities in northwestern Syria and urged all parties to avoid any military offensive in the region and to abide by their commitments to de-escalate violence in Idlib.

On May 13, Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, [spoke](#) to journalists, expressing the United Nations' concern at continuing reports of violence and hostilities in northwestern Syria, stating that 18 health facilities, including 11 in Hama governorate, six in Idlib governorate, and one in Aleppo governorate, has been struck since April 28; he pointedly failed to identify the party responsible for bombing the health facilities.

On May 17, the Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in northern Syria, again at the invitation of Kuwait, Germany and Belgium. Rosemary Dicarolo, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding and Political Affairs, warned in [her briefing](#) against the consequences of continued hostilities in northern Syria. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, [briefed](#) the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in northwestern Syria, concluding with the question: What is the point of the Security Council passing resolutions like that if States are not going to comply with them?

On May 17, Amnesty International [denounced](#) attacks on medical facilities and classified them as war crimes.

On May 24, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued [its third report](#) on the situation in northwest Syria for the period from April 28 to May 24, stating that 20 medical facilities had been affected by the conflict, two of them more than once. The report highlighted the need to increase the number of mobile clinics to serve the displaced.



Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:

“The world cannot tolerate such monstrous barbarism and relentless assaults on centers providing medical services to the wounded or injured. This continuous targeting is no longer even simply an attack on the Syrian people and society alone, but is an assault on all the most basic tenets of humanity, which will encourage other criminals and tyrants to replicate this unspeakable savagery against humanity. There is an imperative need for immediate action by an international civilizational coalition outside the Security Council to end these barbaric and repeated crimes against humanity which violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law. “

Methodology:

This report highlights attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces against medical facilities in the fourth and final de-escalation zone (consisting of Idlib governorate and parts of the governorates of Hama, Aleppo and Latakia) that occurred during the latest military campaign on the region from April 26, 2019, to May 24, 2019.

The record of attacks included in this report includes:

First: Bombings that targeted medical facilities, with no military installations or equipment nearby.

Second: Bombings that targeted medical facilities whose work has been suspended for fear of being shelled and due to the displacement of the residents of the area.

Third: Medical facilities have been subjected to more than one attack, and we document each attack as a separate violation.

Under international humanitarian law, civilian objects are classed as being protected from military attacks unless they are used for military purposes, with this protection suspended when these objects are used for military purposes and for the duration of such use; once the civilian object is no longer being used for any military purpose and returns to its former civilian status, military attacks are once again prohibited and the object's protected status is resumed.

In the course of our work on this report, we sometimes had difficulty in documenting incidents because of the location of the medical facilities at the contact lines, as well as because of the heavy bombardment these areas were subjected to.



In general, this report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on our extensive network of various credible 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 or those who saw or photographed the violation, 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, examined the deceased victims' bodies, and identified the cause of death.

SNHR also analyzes videos and photographs that 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 scale and extent of the destruction inflicted on medical facilities following attacks Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

Furthermore, we 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 material. 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 SNHR's [methodology](#).

This report contains seven first-hand accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with eyewitnesses or with individuals concerned with the work of these facilities, none of which are cited from any open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided without us offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, providing assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias.



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.

II. The Responsibility to Protect Civilians in Syria

For eight years, the Syrian regime has committed grave crimes and violations against Syrian civilians. It has also consistently failed to respond to any of the demands of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, or to those of the High Commission for Human Rights, or even to Security Council resolutions. The Security Council, which was supposed to take collective measures and action under Article 41 and 42 of the Charter of the United Nations, also failed because of the immunity granted by Russia to the Syrian regime, with Russia routinely using its veto in the case of the Syrian regime, which not only failed to abide by the responsibility for the protection of civilians, but committed the most egregious violations against them, reaching the level of crimes against humanity, and extermination within detention centers through torture.

In its report issued in December 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty stressed that: “The Security Council should take into account in all its deliberations that, if it fails to discharge its responsibility to protect in conscience-shocking situations crying out for action, concerned states may not rule out other means to meet the gravity and urgency of that situation”

Such conscience-shocking situations are exactly what have continued to happen in Syria, not only in the form of one massacre or one violation but in industrial-scale killings and torture, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, and besieging civilians. The list of crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Syrian regime and its allies goes on. The Security Council has signally failed to assume its responsibilities in the Syrian case, despite the Syrian Network for Human Rights, international organizations and UN commissions of inquiry crying out for action by the Security Council many thousands of times. In this context, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty affirmed in the same report: “it would be impossible to find consensus, in the Commission’s view, around any set of proposals for military intervention which acknowledged the validity of any intervention not authorized by the Security Council or General Assembly. But that may still leave circumstances when the Security Council fails to discharge what this Commission would regard as its responsibility to protect, in a conscience-shocking situation crying out for action. It is a real question in these circumstances where lies the most harm: **in the damage to international order if the Security Council is bypassed or in the damage to that order if human beings are slaughtered while the Security Council stands by.”**



III. The Data Analysis Shows a Deliberate Pattern of Targeting Medical Facilities in the Fourth De-Escalation Zone by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces

The Sochi agreement did not succeed in stopping the targeting of vital medical facilities, with SNHR's data documenting at least 39 attacks on medical facilities by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in the fourth de-escalation zone from September 17, 2018, to May 24, 2019, 29 of which occurred during the recent military campaign, equivalent to about 75 percent of the total attacks. These attacks have caused damage to about 24 medical facilities. The locations of medical facilities targeted by Syrian-Russian alliance forces during this campaign show that some of them are located in areas far from the population centers, indicating deliberate targeting in order to intentionally inflict damage.

Most of the time, according to our monitoring, the frequency of attacks on medical facilities decreases after the area is cleared of its population. This confirms that the primary objective of the Syrian regime and its allies is to instill terror in the hearts of civilians. It is also known that the Syrian regime deliberately targets these facilities to make it difficult or impossible to provide medical services to the sick and wounded, in addition to using such attacks as a means of escalating the siege on civilians and intensifying their suffering. During this campaign, even more than in previous regime operations, we have noticed the intention of Syrian-Russian alliance forces intentional repeated targeting of the same medical facility, such as the '111' Hospital in Qal'at al Madiq town in the northern suburbs of Hama, which was attacked twice by Syrian Regime forces, and the Surgical Unit in Kafr Zita in the northern suburbs of Hama, which was also attacked twice, once at the hands of Syrian Regime forces and again at the hands of Russian forces. We also documented the bombing of medical facilities even after they had been put out of service, such as Kafr Nbouda Dispensary in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, the Tarmala Specialist Hospital and the Dialysis Unit in Tarmala village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, and the Nabd al Hayat Hospital in Hass village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

If Syrian-Russian alliance forces continue using this approach and targeting medical facilities, this will have a devastating impact on the lives of civilians in that region. The lack of medical care is one of the main reasons why thousands of civilians flee their homes to live in makeshift camps that lack the most basic elements of life; this is in addition to the horrendous impact of losing a large number of medical facilities on the situation of the wounded and sufferers from chronic diseases, as well as on children and pregnant women. SNHR estimates the toll of injured as a result of the recent military operations at approximately 832 civilians.



We spoke with Dr. Mohamad Katoub¹ , Senior Advocacy Manager at the Syrian American Medical Society “SAMS” about the most prominent incidents that the organization’s facilities have been subjected to in the recent campaign and the procedures followed by the organization. He told us: **“Four of our organization’s facilities in the fourth de-escalation zone, which are part of the United Nations deconfliction mechanism, were targeted directly by the Syrian Regime and Russian forces during their recent military campaign in the region, which put them out of service. As a precautionary measure, the organization had to suspend the work of 14 of its facilities in full and partially for a limited time as necessary and to ensure the safety of personnel working in them, while other centers operate in emergency situations and receive emergency cases only “** Dr. Mohamad noted that it is difficult to respond to the medical requirements of those displaced by the military campaign, as the number of visitors to the medical facilities that remain in service has increased, imposing a significant burden on them. He warned ominously: **“The ongoing enormous pressure on the medical centers that are still operating predicts a humanitarian disaster that will happen in the near term. “**

Dr. Maram al Sheikh² , the Director of the ‘Free’ Hama Health Directorate, told the SNHR that at least 12 of the directorate’s 19 medical facilities were targeted by Syrian and Russian forces and were put out of service, including facilities that were controlled by Syrian Regime forces after their advance in towns in Hama suburbs. Dr. Maram told us that the Directorate has focused on two central issues to mitigate the impact of the humanitarian disaster on civilians caused by the targeting of the medical sector: **“The Directorate has reopened three surgical units in the northern suburbs of Hama and the southern suburbs of Idlib to provide emergency services in areas that are still under bombardment. We are also conducting a field survey of the displaced to determine their numbers, places and needs. We are working to reopen five primary care centers in the camps and surrounding areas, in addition to two hospitals for women and children, but these measures are insufficient in light of the lack of resources and constant fear of the exposure of these facilities to bombardment. “**

We also spoke to Dr. Wasel Jerk³ , Director of Medical Projects at the Syria for Relief and Development Organization (SRD) about the impact of the recent military campaign by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the work of the facilities supported by the organization and the actions

¹ Via WhatsApp on May 21, 2019

² Via phone call on May 18, 2019

³ Via WhatsApp on May 17, 2019



taken by them. He told us: **“The last campaign, until May 17, caused damage to three of our facilities, all of which were put out of service, in addition to other facilities⁴, causing the region to be deprived of all healthcare services, and we worked in the organization to run mobile clinics to the areas where people flee to provide them with the possible medical services. “**

IV. Six Medical Facilities Bombed by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Were Part of the Deconfliction Mechanism Adopted by the United Nations

Despite years of attempts by medical organizations to make all possible efforts to conceal medical centers for fear of bombardment, even reaching the extent of using cellars in buildings and caves in the mountains as medical facilities, and reinforcing these medical facilities with sand berms, all attempts were unsuccessful due to informers collaborating with Syrian Regime forces or through Russian reconnaissance planes geolocating medical centers with the aim of deliberately and intentionally bombing them.

In September 2014, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) established [a mechanism](#) in an attempt at the time to protect health facilities in Syria from attacks by International Coalition forces. The mechanism provided the International Coalition forces, Russia, Turkey and the International Syria Support Group Chairs (Government of the United States and the Russian Federation) with humanitarian static locations, or humanitarian missions movements to mitigate, insofar as possible, the risks of being targeted / hit by an air strike; the use of this mechanism does not constitute a legally binding agreement and does not guarantee the safety of individuals, installations or locations. This mechanism has therefore provided little in the protection of medical facilities, and has perhaps even contributed to the provision of information to the Russian forces that used them in the subsequent bombing of medical facilities. SNHR's team documented that out of the 24 medical facilities targeted in the recent period, six had been included in this deconfliction mechanism. In practice, these facilities did not benefit; in fact, rather than protecting them, the mechanism may have exposed them to further danger by revealing their location and place of work.

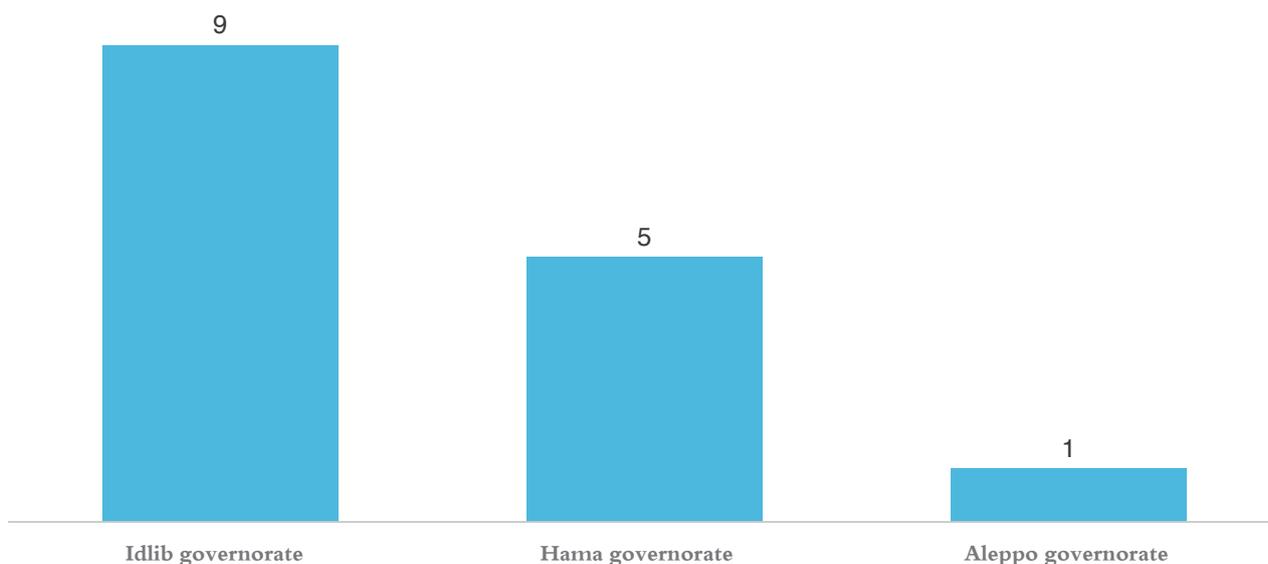
⁴ We recorded a fourth attack on a medical facility of the organization on May 23



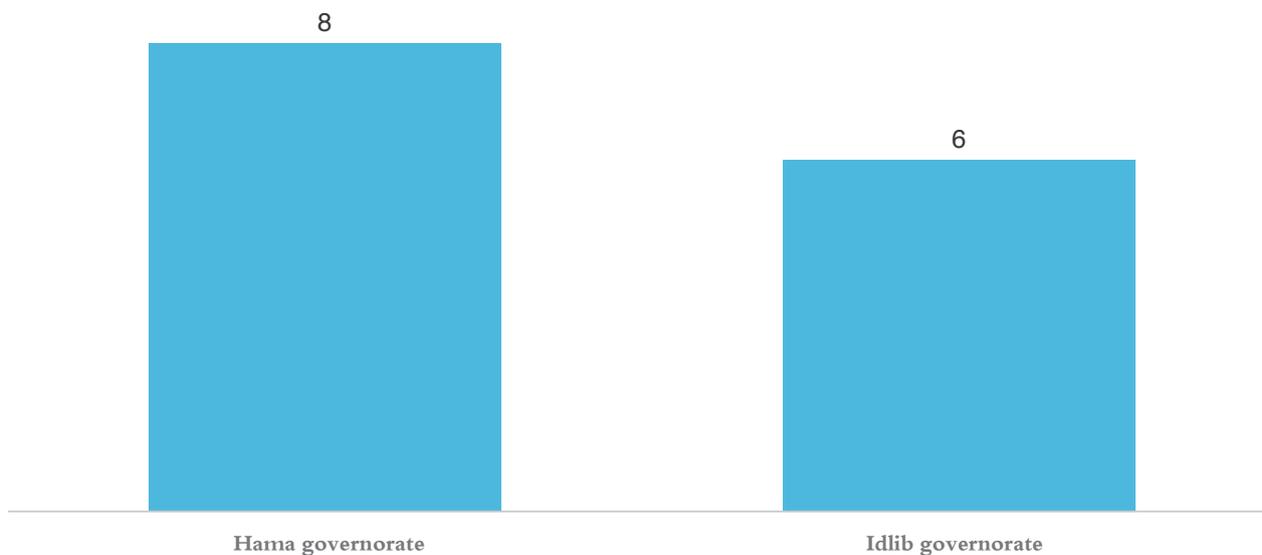
V. The Record of Targeting Medical Facilities in the Fourth De-Escalation Zone by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces in the Recent Military Campaign

According to the SNHR's database, at least 29 attacks against medical facilities were recorded between April 26 and May 24, 2019, causing damage to 24 medical facilities. The attacks by the main perpetrator parties were distributed as follows:

Syrian Regime forces: 15, distributed as follows:



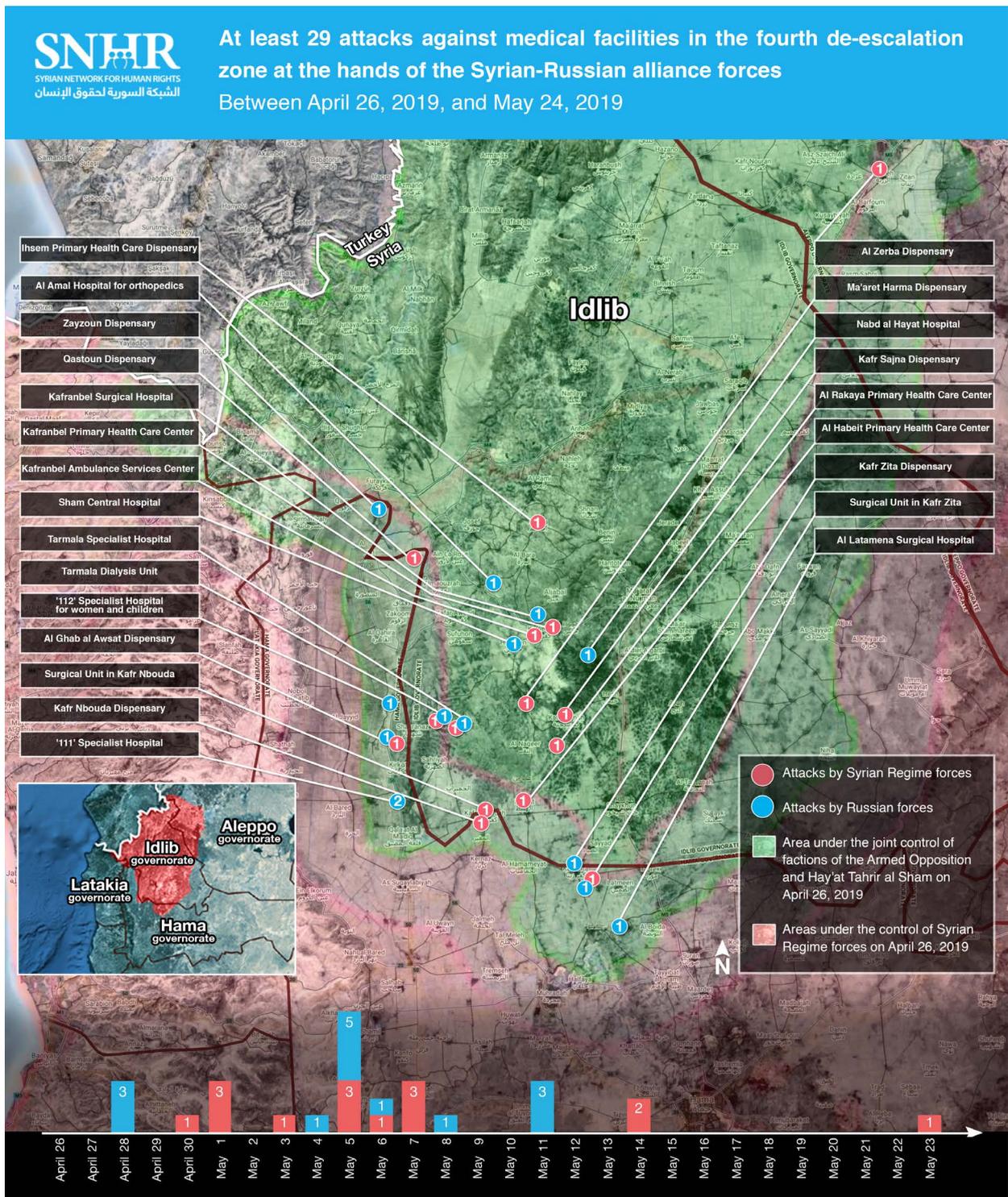
Russian forces: 14, distributed as follows:



Cluster munitions were deployed by the Syrian Regime forces in one of these attacks, namely the attack on the Kafranbel Primary Health Care Center on May 23.

The latest military escalation on the fourth de-escalation zone also resulted in the deaths of at least four medical personnel between April 26 and May 24, 2019. All were killed at the hands of Syrian Regime forces.

Map showing approximate locations of medical facilities where we documented attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, and the chronology of those incidents:



VI. The Most Notable Attacks on Medical Facilities in the Fourth De-Escalation Zone by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces in the Recent Military Campaign

Al Latamena Surgical Hospital:

This hospital, located in al Latamena town in Hama governorate's northwestern suburbs, was established inside a fortified underground cave in an attempt to safeguard the facility and patients, providing surgical services to approximately 3,200 beneficiaries per month.

On Sunday, April 28, 2019, at around 18:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles directly targeting the hospital, causing moderate material damage to [some of the hospital sections' equipment](#), including the garage and [an ambulance belonging to the hospital](#), and putting the hospital out of service. We note that the same forces had also fired a missile that landed 100 meters away from the hospital the previous day. The town was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

'111' Hospital for Women and Children:

This hospital, located in the northern neighborhood of Qal'at al Madiq in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, is located on the ground floor of the former Akram Ali al Ahmad Secondary School. The hospital, run by the ['Free' Hama Health Directorate](#), provides maternity, child and general surgery services to approximately 4,500 beneficiaries per month. The hospital was attacked two times in one day, putting it out of service.

At around dawn on Sunday April 28, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the hospital, causing moderate material damage to the hospital equipment. The same warplanes repeated their bombardment of the hospital at around 13:30 on the same day, causing [significant material damage to the equipment](#) and building, putting it out of service. The town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.

Al Habeit Primary Health Care Center:

This healthcare center, located in the center of al Habeit village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, includes sections for internal diseases, maternity, children and dentistry, benefiting approximately 2,100 beneficiaries per month.

On Tuesday, April 30, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire missiles near the center, causing partial destruction of the center building, as well as [inflicting moderate material damage to the furniture and equipment](#). The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.





Destruction inflicted on the al Habeit Primary Health Care Center following a ground attack by Syrian Regime forces on al Habeit village, Idlib – April 30, 2019

Al Rakaya Primary Health Care Center:

This health care center, located in al Rakaya village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, includes internal, maternity and children clinics, benefiting approximately 7,000 people per month, supported by the Syria for Relief and Development Organization (SRD). On Friday, May 3, 2019, Syrian Regime helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on the center; one of the barrel bombs fell at the center's entrance, [partially destroying its entrance](#), as well as [inflicting moderate material damage](#) to its equipment, putting it out of service, while the other fell almost 15 meters away. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.



Destruction caused to the building of al Rakaya Primary Health Care Center by an air attack by the Syrian Regime air force on al Rakaya village, Idlib – May 3, 2019



Ma'aret Harma Dispensary:

This dispensary, located in Ma'aret Harma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, includes internal, maternity and children's clinics, benefiting approximately 7,500 people per month. The dispensary is supported by the Syria for Relief and Development Organization (SRD).

On Tuesday, May 7, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian Regime forces' warplanes fired a number of missiles near the dispensary, partially destroying the building, as well as inflicting moderate material damage to its equipment and cladding. We note that on May 4, the same warplanes strafed an area around 30 meters from the hospital with machine guns, breaking the windows of the building. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.

Surgical Unit in Kafr Zita, the former 'Martyr Hasan al A'raj Hospital':

The surgical unit, located in a cave in Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, was established in 2015; it includes sections for general surgery and orthopedic surgery, and benefits approximately 1,500 people per month. The unit, which is supported by [Physician Across Countries](#) (PAC), was attacked two times in one day.

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the unit, after which Syrian Regime helicopters dropped barrel bombs that fell directly on and around the unit, partially destroying its structure, as well as [inflicting moderate material damage](#) to [the equipment](#), putting it out of service. Kafr Zita city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.

SNHR contacted Mr. Abdul Razzaq Qaddour⁵, the administrative director of Kafr Zita Surgical Unit, who told us that hospital personnel were working in the internal fortified sections as part of an emergency plan on the day of the attack. He recalled: **“At around 11 am, the Russian warplanes and the helicopters of the Syrian regime attacked us unexpectedly, targeting the external hospital structure, which caused significant damage to the infrastructure, including the fuel and water tanks, generators and the communications group. The raids also completely destroyed the hospital's external structure, putting it out of service, so I suspended work at the hospital. “**

Mr. Abdul Razzaq added **“At the moment of bombing, we were in the internal departments of the hospital, and were able to evacuate medical personnel and patients from it to other hospitals close to the area.”**

⁵ Via WhatsApp on May 13, 2019



Tarmala Specialist Hospital and Tarmala Dialysis Unit

This hospital and unit are located in Tarmala village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate within a single block. The hospital, which provides orthopedic and general surgery services, benefits approximately 4,160 people per month, while the dialysis unit provides services to 59 people per month. The facilities, which come under the remit of the deconfliction mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations, are supported by the [Syrian American Medical Society](#), known by its acronym 'SAMS'. Work was suspended in both facilities on May 4 due to heavy bombardment of the area. The building containing the two facilities was put completely out of service after being attacked twice.

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles which landed around 100 meters from the building, with the explosions causing moderate material damage to the building and equipment inside it.

On Tuesday, May 14, 2019, fixed-wing 'Sikhwi 24' Syrian Regime warplanes launched several air raids throughout the day; three of these targeted an area close to the hospital, while another one targeted the hospital building directly, causing [massive destruction](#) to the structure of [the hospital whose equipment](#) had been removed before it was bombed, putting it out of service. We further note that Russian air force planes carried out an air raid using missiles near the building the next day. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.



Destruction inflicted on the Tarmala Specialist Hospital and Tarmala Dialysis Unit in air raids by Syrian Regime warplanes – May 14, 2019 – By Suhail al Ali



Nabd al Hayat Hospital:

The hospital is located in a cave on the outskirts of Hass village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The hospital, which contains sections for general and orthopedic surgery, and for atrial, urinary and internal diseases, benefits approximately 6,000 people. The hospital is supported by Syria Relief and Development Organization (SRD).

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, at around 15:00, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles directly targeting Nabd al Hayat Hospital, [causing severe material damage](#) to [the hospital](#) and [its equipment](#). We note that the hospital patients and medical staff were evacuated following the military escalation against the area by the Syrian-Russian Alliance forces. We further note that the area in which the hospital is located has been subjected to several raids before and since this date. Hass village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.



SNHR contacted Mr. Obayda Dandoush⁶, Safety and Response Officer at the Syria Relief and Development Organization (SRD), concerning the targeting of Nabd al Hayat Hospital. He told us: **“The Russian warplanes directly targeted with several air raids Nabd al Hayat Hospital which is located near Hass village in the southern suburbs of Idlib. The missiles fell consecutively at the entrance to the hospital, which is fortified within specially created mountainside shelter. This caused damage to many sections of the hospital. The damage rate has reached 85 percent and the hospital can’t be repaired due to the severity of the cracks [in the structure] and the great damage caused to the building. “**

Kafranbel Surgical Hospital:

The hospital is located in the north of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate- part of which is fortified inside caves that were dug underground under the building of the main hospital, supported by the Hand in Hand for Aid and Development Organization (HIHFAD), and provides surgical and reproductive health services, benefiting approximately 6,500 people per year.

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, at around 17:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, carried out four attacks directly targeted Kafranbel Surgical Hospital, resulting in the death of a civilian who was reviewing the hospital, [in addition to](#) causing [significant destruction](#) to [the hospital building](#), and causing [moderate material damage](#) to [the equipment](#), as well as inflicting massive destruction on an ambulance belonging to the Sham ambulance system that was parked in front of the hospital. We note that the hospital was subjected to further attacks by the same forces on the following two days, despite being out of service, followed by an attack by fixed-wing Syrian Regime forces warplanes on May 10. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incidents.

⁶ Via WhatsApp on May 7, 2019





Destruction inflicted in Kafranbel Surgical Hospital by a Russian air attack on Kafranbel city, Idlib – May 5, 2019
 – By Saed al Din Zaidan



Destruction inflicted on an ambulance by a Russian air attack on Kafranbel Surgical Hospital in Kafranbel city, Idlib – May 5, 2019 – By Omar Haj Kaddour



SNHR contacted Bahaa al Swaid⁷, an activist from Kafranbel city. He told us: **“On May 5, a Russian warplane ‘visible to the naked eye’ carried out several raids on the northern sides of Kafranbel city, and I was in a location close to the area, where the warplane directly targeted the hospital with four missiles - the warplane fired a missile, then circled around and returned to fire the next missile this way. After it finished bombing, and we were informed by the observatories via the wireless walkie-talkies that the warplanes had left, I went directly to the site. The hospital was heavily destroyed, in addition to damage to civilian cars and ambulances. We inspected the site searching for wounded people and martyrs. The following day, the Russian warplanes also bombed the hospital building and caused additional damage. “**

Al Amal Hospital for orthopedics:

The hospital, located in Kansfara village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, specialized in orthopedic and joints surgery, serving approximately 3,000 people per month.

On Monday, May 6, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles near al Amal Hospital for orthopedics, which landed about 50 meters from the hospital, causing moderate material damage to the hospital building and equipment. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Al Ghab al Awsat Dispensary:

The dispensary, located in al Hawija village in Sahl al Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, is run by the 'Free' Hama Health Directorate. The dispensary includes clinics for children, an internal clinic and public medicine service, and provides ambulance services. The center was subjected to two attacks that put it out of service.

On Tuesday, May 7, 2019, a Syrian regime helicopter dropped a barrel bomb about 100 meters from the facility, causing considerable material damage to the center building and equipment. We note that the administration of the center had suspended its work since a few days before that on May 1, 2019, following the military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the region.

On Saturday, May 11, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a missile at al Ghab al Awsat Dispensary, [partially destroying the building](#), as well as [inflicting significant damage to its equipment](#), putting it out of service. Al Hawija village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

⁷ Via WhatsApp on May 10, 2019





We contacted Mr. Hassan al Eisa⁸, Managing Director of al Ghab al Awsat Dispensary, who told us: **“On Saturday, May 11, at around 5:45 pm, as we were on our way to the center to unload equipment, after being hit by barrel bombs dropped by helicopters on May 7; Russian warplanes directly bombed the center, causing great destruction to a large part of it and damaged some of the furniture and pharmaceutical stocks inside it. We are still trying to retrieve what is left inside, but for security reasons because of the heavy bombardment of the area, we have not been able to do so yet. “**

Kafr Zita Dispensary:

The dispensary is located in Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, provides general medicine and pediatric services, supported by the Syrian American Medical Society “SAMS”, and benefits approximately 1,600 people.

On Wednesday, May 8, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a missile at the center, [partially destroying](#) the [center building](#), as well as [inflicting significant material damage](#) to its equipment. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

⁸ Via WhatsApp on May 14, 2019





Damage inflicted by Russian air attack on Kafr Zita Dispensary, Hama – May 8, 2019

'112' Specialist Hospital:

The hospital, located in al Hawash village in Sahl al Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, which specialized in gynecology and pediatrics, was run by the 'Free' Hama Health Directorate, and provided services to approximately 4,000 beneficiaries per month.

On Saturday, May 11, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a missile near the hospital, causing moderate material damage to the center building and equipment. We note that the administration of the center suspended work there since May 1, 2019, following the military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the region. Al Hawash village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Sham Central Hospital:

The hospital, which is located to the west of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, contains sections for general, neurology and orthopedic surgery, and is supported by the [Sham Humanitarian Foundation](#), benefiting approximately 4,500 people.

On Saturday, May 11, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a missile at the hospital entrance, [partially destroying](#) the building, as well as [inflicting moderate material damage](#) to [its equipment](#), putting it out of service. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Kafranbel Primary Health Care Center:

The center, located in Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, specializes in providing vaccines for children, and is supported by the Syria for Relief and Development Organization 'SRD'

On Thursday, May 23, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire several missiles loaded with cluster munitions deployed in the center of the city, one of which targeted the center, [causing moderate material damage](#). The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The incidents included in this report undoubtedly constitute a violation of Security Council resolutions numbers 2139 and 2254, which call for an end to indiscriminate attacks, as well as constituting a violation of articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute by the crime of intentional murder, which constitute war crimes.
- The attacks included in this report constitute a violation of Security Council resolution number 2286, which calls for an end to violations and abuses committed in armed conflicts against medical personnel and humanitarian personnel who perform specifically medical duties, as well as against their means of transport and equipment, and against hospitals and other medical facilities.
- We stress that most of the bombing incidents included in the report targeted unarmed civilian individuals, and therefore the aggressor forces violated the provisions of international human rights law that protects the right to life. In addition to being committed in the context of a non-international armed conflict, this amounts to and possesses all the constituent elements of a war crime.
- The attacks included in the report are considered a violation of customary international humanitarian law, as the shells were fired at facilities and vehicles used to provide medical services rather than being directed at achieving any specific military objective.
- Bombardment has caused incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians or serious damage to civilian objects. There are very strong indications suggesting that the damage was exceptionally excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.



Recommendations:

UN Security Council:

- The Security Council should take further action after resolutions 2139 and 2254, having failed to impose any obligation to stop indiscriminate shelling which must be adhered to by all parties to the conflict, as well as to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian issue must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those involved in perpetrating crimes should be held accountable, including the Russian regime, after having been proven to be involved in committing war crimes.
- Expand the existing sanctions to include the Syrian, Iranian and Russian regimes that are directly involved in committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people.
- Include the militias fighting alongside the Syrian government that have committed large-scale massacres, such as Iranian militias, Lebanese Hezbollah and other Shiite brigades, as well as the National Defense Army, and Shabbiha on the international terrorism list.
- Stop treating the Syrian government as a legitimate official party after its perpetration of crimes against humanity in terms of relief efforts, and stop providing it with the largest part of the financial assistance and other support, which largely fails to reach the intended beneficiaries, instead being given to the loyalists of the Syrian government.

International Community:

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing, and to lift sieges, as well as increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to ensure that fair trials are held for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine 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 concerning the incidents mentioned in this report and the incidents that preceded it, which form a stark landmark in light of the smaller daily sporadic violations, and endeavour to implement the recommendations included in this report.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

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

International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM):

- The IIIM should study the incidents detailed in this report and those detailed in previous reports, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights being ready to cooperate and provide further evidence and details.

European Union and the United States of America:

- Support the International Impartial Mechanism established by General Assembly resolution 71/248 of December 21, 2016, open the courts of local states which have the principle of universal jurisdiction, and prosecute war crimes committed in Syria.

The Syrian Regime:

- Stop treating the Syrian state as the private property of the ruling family.
- Stop terrorizing Syrian society by killing personnel providing the public with medical, ambulance, and rescue services.
- Cease shelling of hospitals, protected objects and civilian areas, and respect customary humanitarian law.
- Bear all legal and material consequences, and compensate the victims and their families from the resources of the Syrian state.



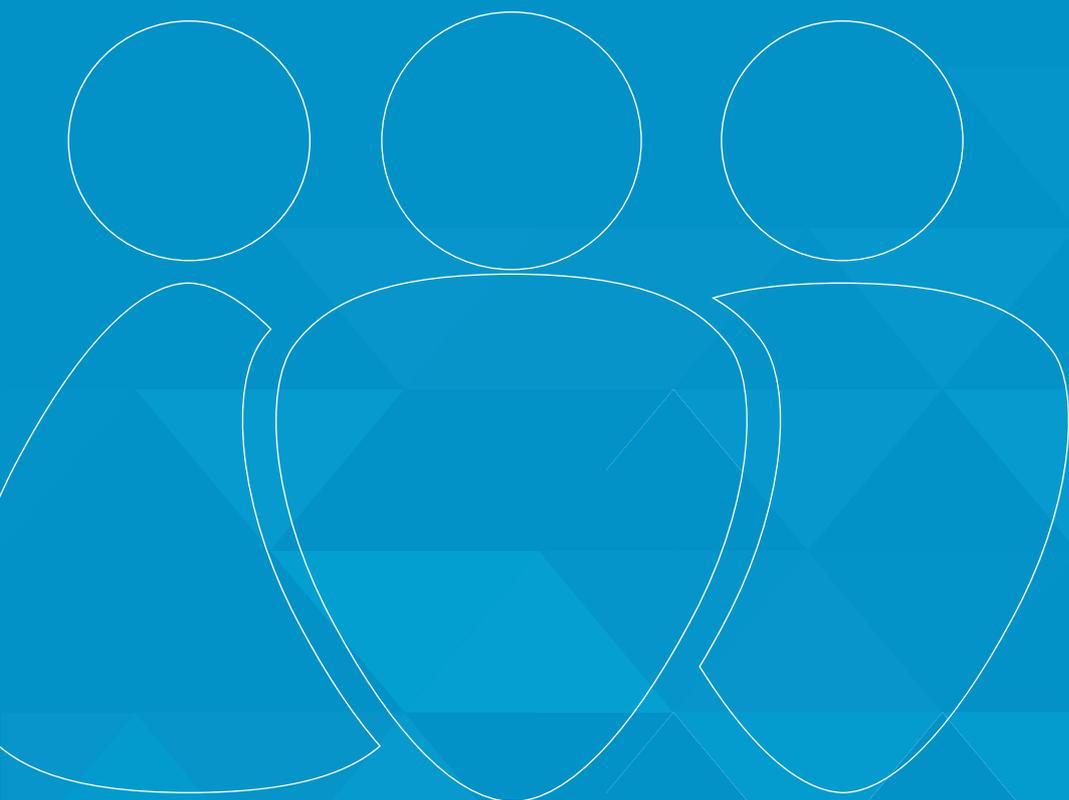
The Russian Regime:

- Launch investigations into the incidents detailed in this report, inform the Syrian community of their results, and hold those involved accountable.
- Compensate, rebuild and reequip all damaged centers and facilities, and compensate the wounded and the bereaved families of those killed by the current Russian regime.
- Ensure the complete cessation of bombardment of hospitals, protected objects and respect the customary humanitarian law.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our sincere thanks to all the medical personnel and activists whose contributions have enriched this report, and our condolences to the victims and their families.





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