

Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Target 67 Medical Facilities in Northwest Syria Since April 26, 2019

The United States of America
Should Intervene to Stop Russian
War Crimes and Bombardment of
Medical Facilities

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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

The Russian forces' tactic in targeting medical facilities is to push the people towards despair, displace them and force them to flee and surrender; as one of the superpower countries and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it is absolutely above international law, and does not care about repeatedly committing war crimes no matter how many, because its objective is to enable its ally the Syrian regime to take control over the entire Syrian territory, and to impose a settlement through which countless war crimes committed by the Russian forces will simply be accepted as a fait accompli. Russia is also wholly indifferent to human rights and, as an undemocratic, largely totalitarian state, has no need to worry about domestic opposition to its forces crimes in Syria, with its state-controlled media coverage also limited. Meanwhile, the Western countries, particularly the United States of America, have not exercised sufficient political and economic pressure to combat or even deter the Russian forces' deliberate bombing of medical facilities. For all these reasons, Russia's blatant targeting of medical units and facilities on a horrific scale and intensity is



unprecedented in the modern age, and calls for a serious stand by human rights organizations and members of the international legal community around the world.

As the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) team has observed over the past nine years and up to the present moment, the targeting of medical facilities in Syria is carried out calculatingly and deliberately, with regime intelligence services first conducting surveillance operations to locate field hospitals, private hospitals or even mobile medical units with the aim of bombing them. On many occasions, we have noted the bombardment of buildings or streets around hospitals in attempts to hit the hospitals directly. We also recorded the repeated targeting of the same medical facilities on a number of occasions, which is evidence of the regime's and its allies' obsessive desire to annihilate all medical facilities. Our database of attacks on humanitarian facilities reflects 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, and stores of medicines and generators supplying these facilities, leading to the facilities' permanent or temporary closure, as well as leaving hundreds of wounded or injured people adversely affected.

Since April 26, 2019, the northwest region of Syria, including the northeastern suburbs of Hama and Idlib governorates, the southwestern suburbs of Aleppo, and the northwestern suburbs of Latakia, have seen a military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, which is the most violent to date compared to previous military campaigns seen in the region. During this period, the region has witnessed the declaration of four ceasefire agreements; the first two of these were announced on August 1 and 31, 2019 respectively, and the third on January 9, 2020, while the Turkish Ministry of Defense announced the fourth and last one on January 12; every one of these agreements was followed by an escalation in military operations by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, with the northwest region of Syria being subjected to intense and unimaginably brutal violations of every kind over many months. Despite this, the region does not receive international attention from media and human rights bodies at any level equivalent to the massive and unprecedented scale and breadth of human suffering. We no longer even hear international condemnations of this constant barbaric slaughter and terrorizing of civilians, with the displacement of hundreds of thousands increasing the people's suffering and their despair of any hope or belief in justice and international law, and encouraging the perpetrators of the crimes to continue and further intensify their brutality.



Following the announcement of the last ceasefire on January 12, 2020, the region witnessed a military escalation from several axes which has been the most violent since April 2019. We have issued [a report](#) documenting the most notable violations committed since the start of this latest escalation, which was accompanied by a ground advance by Syrian Regime forces backed by Iranian militias, who seized control over several areas, villages, and towns in Idlib and Aleppo suburbs, most notably the cities of Ma'aret al Numan and Saraqeb in Idlib suburbs. The Syrian regime's advance has captured around 25 percent of the territory that was previously under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, with this advance causing a wave of displacement which is the worst since the beginning of the popular uprising in Syria in March 2011. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicated in [its eighth report](#) issued on February 13, 2020 on the humanitarian situation in northwest Syria that approximately 142,000 civilians had been displaced between February 9 and 12 alone, bringing the total number of displaced people to more than 800,000 people since December 1, 2019, more than 60 percent of whom are children.

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

“After the Security Council's failure to protect the medical facilities in Syria from brutal Russian bombing, there is no hope for ending these ongoing war crimes except through the establishment of an international civilized humanitarian coalition led by the United States of America, European states, Canada, and Australia that aims to protect civilians and stop the bombing of medical facilities. Without such action, no amount of reports and condemnations will have any effect, and crimes against humanity and war crimes will continue to be committed against the Syrian people, constituting a shameful stain on modern history, with those states which claim to uphold the rule of law and to stand for civilized values bearing the responsibility more than others.”

II. Tireless Efforts to Deter Russian Forces from Bombing Medical Facilities Prove Fruitless to Date

On August 1, 2019, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [announced](#) a decision to establish an internal United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry to investigate the attacks that occurred in northwest Syria since the implementation of the Sochi Agreement on September 17, 2018, including those that damaged or destroyed hospitals. On September 13, 2019, the members of this board were [announced](#), with its work beginning on September 30. The results of this board's work have not been announced up to the moment of preparing this report.



On December 31, 2019, the New York Times [published](#) an in-depth investigative report into a number of attacks on vital facilities, most of which were medical facilities; the results of the investigations carried out by the newspaper matched SNHR's conclusions and added further, equally accurate details to them, confirming the involvement of Syrian-Russian alliance forces in committing most of these attacks. The Syrian Network for Human Rights contributed to these investigations based on a data exchange agreement with the newspaper.

On January 31, 2020, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) [confirmed](#) that a significant number of hospitals had been bombed in northwest Syria in the space of just a few months, leaving injured or ill people in these areas with fewer and fewer chances to even access health facilities.

In a statement issued on February 1, 2020, Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, [expressed](#) the Secretary-General's deep concern over the ongoing military escalation in northwest Syria, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities, reaffirming that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including on healthcare and education facilities, are unacceptable.

On February 3, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) [voiced](#) alarm and expressed its concern at the critical health threats facing civilians in northwest Syria after more than 50 health facilities had been put out of service. The organization described the carnage witnessed by the region as representing one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises.

On Friday, February 14, 2020, Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, [revealed](#) in his daily press briefing that 72 health facilities had announced the suspension of their operations in the affected areas of Idlib and Aleppo in the previous three days due to insecurity, the displacement of civilians and other circumstances overwhelming their operational capabilities.

None of these condemnations succeeded in even momentarily deterring the Russian forces from bombing medical facilities, according to the documented facts outlined in this report, and due to the blatant and persistent shortcomings of the international community in failing to respond to these crimes. Many medical organizations have been forced to stop work in some of their medical facilities in order to ensure the safety of medical personnel and patients. This is taking place amid a catastrophic situation of displacement and outbreaks of illness and disease caused by massive overcrowding and freezing subzero winter temper-



atures which have increased the number of deaths due to cold and diseases, as happened with the 18-month-old infant girl Iman Laila, who died on February 13 despite her father's desperate efforts to save her, with the lack of any nearby medical center around the place where the displaced family took shelter meaning he had to walk for two hours carrying her in his arms until he found a hospital, by which point she had died. The continuation of the horrific situation as it is portends further humanitarian complications and widespread illness and outbreaks of diseases.

III. Methodology

Over the past nine years, SNHR has been particularly attentive in documenting violations against medical personnel and the targeting of medical facilities, detailing these attacks in periodic monthly reports and through extensive dedicated reports and research papers, the last of which was [our report](#) issued in May 2019 concerning attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces against medical facilities in northwest Syria since April 26, 2019.

This report highlights the record of attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces against medical facilities in northwest Syria that occurred between the beginning of the military campaign on April 26, 2019, and February 18, 2020, outlining incidents that weren't included in the previous report.

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 due to 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, with SNHR documenting each attack as a separate violation.

Under international humanitarian law, civilian structures and objects are classed as being protected from military attacks unless they are used for military purposes, with this protection suspended when they 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 structure's or object's protected status is resumed.

In the course of our work on this report, we sometimes had difficulty in documenting incidents due to 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 to 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 also 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 analyzed videos and photographs that were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. Videos posted by activists show, amongst other things, sites of attacks and the scale and extent of the destruction inflicted on medical facilities following attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

Furthermore, we retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in this report in a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies. 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 four 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, as well as 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, and doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications of these events.

IV. The Syrian-Russian Alliance's Targeting of Medical Facilities in Northwest Syria in Light of the International Protection's Failure

According to the SNHR's database, at least 67 medical facilities have been subjected to approximately 88 incidents of attack by Syrian-Russian alliance forces between April 26, 2019, and February 18, 2020. It appears to us through the monitoring and follow-up operations conducted by SNHR's team that these attacks were deliberate, being intentionally perpetrated to cause the greatest possible amount of damage to these facilities, which was demonstrated in the following main points:

First: The SNHR confirms that of the 67 medical facilities that have been bombed, seven of these medical facilities have been bombed 12 times, despite these facilities being listed within the humanitarian deconfliction [mechanism](#) (which is a mechanism established by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, in September 2014 in an effort to protect health facilities in Syria from attacks by US-led coalition forces, with the humanitarian deconfliction mechanism providing the US-led coalition, Russia, Turkey and the chairs of the International Syria Support Group with data on static humanitarian facilities' locations, or on humanitarian mission movements to mitigate, insofar as possible, the risks of their being targeted / hit by an air strike) meaning that the Russian forces are aware of the locations of these medical facilities, but are still subjecting them to bombing. We believe that there may be more than seven medical facilities that have been bombed, but we faced a great and continuing difficulty in knowing the medical facilities that were shared with the mechanism. We issued a previous [report](#) on this mechanism and an evaluation of its role in protecting medical facilities in Syria.

Second: In the period covered by the report, we documented the Syrian regime's and Russian forces' conducting successive air strikes with short time intervals between each airstrike, ranging from minutes (a double-tap strike), as happened, for example, during the attack by Russian forces on al Eman Hospital in Urm al Kubra village in Aleppo suburbs on August 31, 2019, to intervals of a few days' duration, such as that seen in the attacks on the Jisr al Shoghour Surgical Hospital, known as the "al Kalawi Hospital", which was attacked by two air strikes by the Syrian regime's warplanes, the first on July 10, 2019, and the second on the 12th of the same month.



Some incidents also showed successive attacks by both Russian and Syrian regime war-planes on the same medical facility, either within minutes of each other, such as the attack on the Surgical Unit in Kafr Zita in Hama suburbs on May 5, 2019, when Russian forces carried out an attack on the facility, followed shortly afterwards by a Syrian air attack with barrel bombs on the same facility, or within a few days of each other, such as the attack on the Tarmala Specialist Hospital and the Tarmala Dialysis Unit - listed in the humanitarian deconfliction mechanism - in Tarmala village in Idlib suburbs, which was subjected to a Russian airstrike on May 5, 2019, followed by a Syrian airstrike on the 14th of the same month.

V. Videos Released by the Syrian Regime's Media Outlets Show the Scale of Destruction in Medical Facilities, and Russia Denies Bombing Them

During our monitoring of coverage by pro-Syrian regime social media, we noticed that after Syrian Regime forces invaded Kafr Nbouda town in the northern suburbs of Hama on May 9, 2019, a video was shared by pro-Syrian regime [pages](#) on Facebook showing the Surgical Unit's building in the town and the destruction inflicted on it. As we also noted, a video published by [the Syrian News Agency \(SANA\)](#) on January 28, 2020, showed damage inflicted on the Deir al Sharqi dispensary in Deir al Sharqi village in Idlib suburbs.

In [a statement](#), issued on January 30, 2020, the Russian Ministry of Defense denied that its aircraft had carried out any military operation in southern Idlib targeting a hospital and bakery, although investigations carried out by the SNHR's team clearly indicated that Russian war-planes had taken off from Hmeimim Airbase on the evening of January 29, with activists monitoring these aircraft noting that they had entered the airspace over Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, where they carried out an attack on the al Shami Hospital, known as Ariha Surgical Hospital, causing massive material damage to it, in addition to inflicting a massacre of seven civilians, namely a child, five women and one of the medical personnel working in the hospital. The Russian Ministry of Defense's denial of documented reality was not unusual, with the ministry always denying any bombing of a medical facility or civilian sites.



VI. The Record of Targeting Medical Facilities in Northwest Syria by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Since April 26, 2019

According to the SNHR's database, at least 88 attacks against medical facilities were documented between April 26 and February 18, 2020, all perpetrated by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, causing damage to 67 medical facilities. The attacks were distributed according to the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 52, distributed as follows:

Idlib governorate: 42

Hama governorate: Five

Aleppo governorate: Five

- **Russian forces:** 36, distributed as follows:

Idlib governorate: 21

Hama governorate: Nine

Aleppo governorate: Six

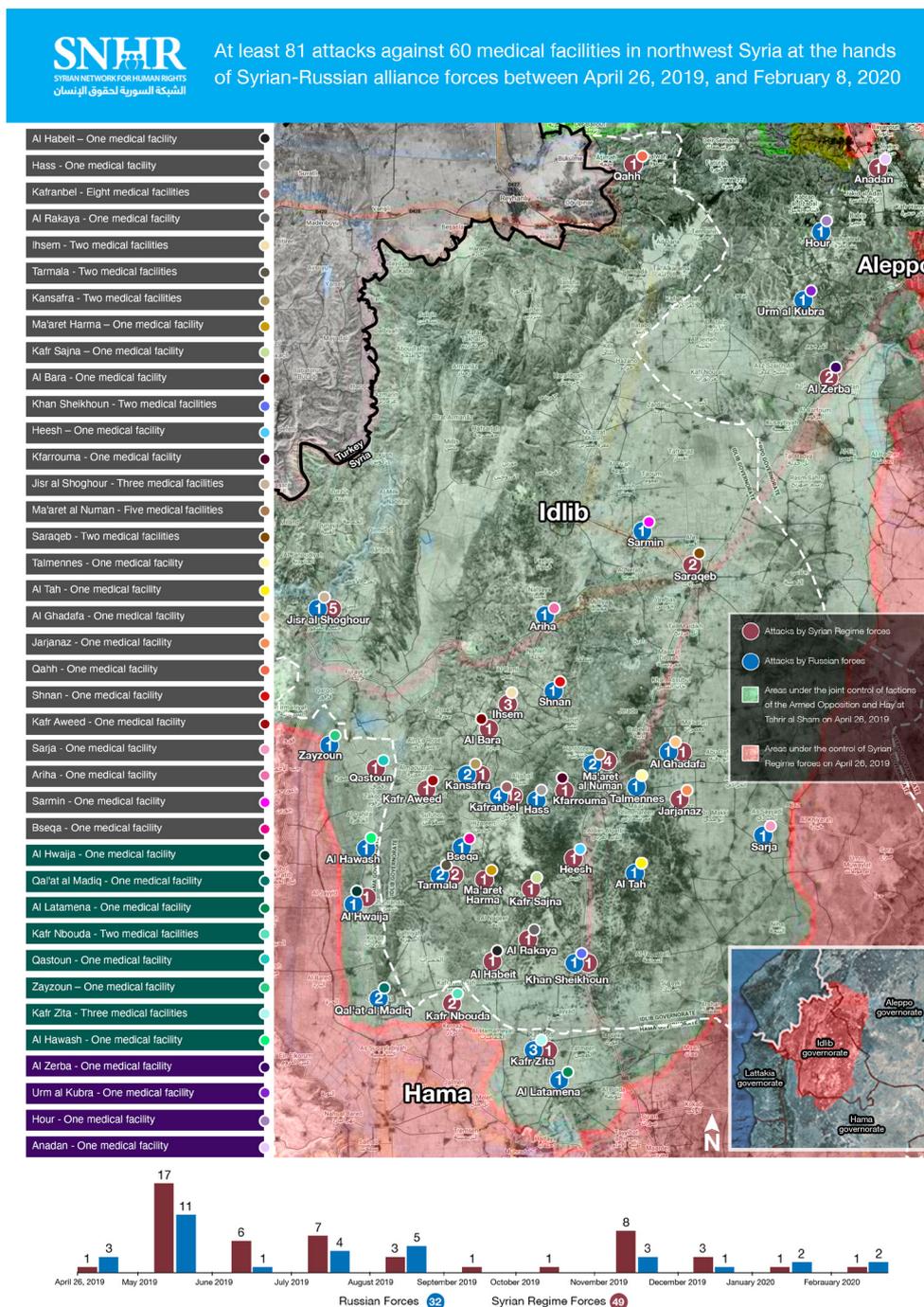
The military escalation on northwest Syria also resulted in the deaths of at least 19 medical personnel between April 26 and February 18, 2020, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Nine

- **Russian forces:** 10



Map showing the distribution of the record of attacks on medical facilities in northwest Syria at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces between April 26, 2019, and February 8, 2020, and the chronology of those incidents:



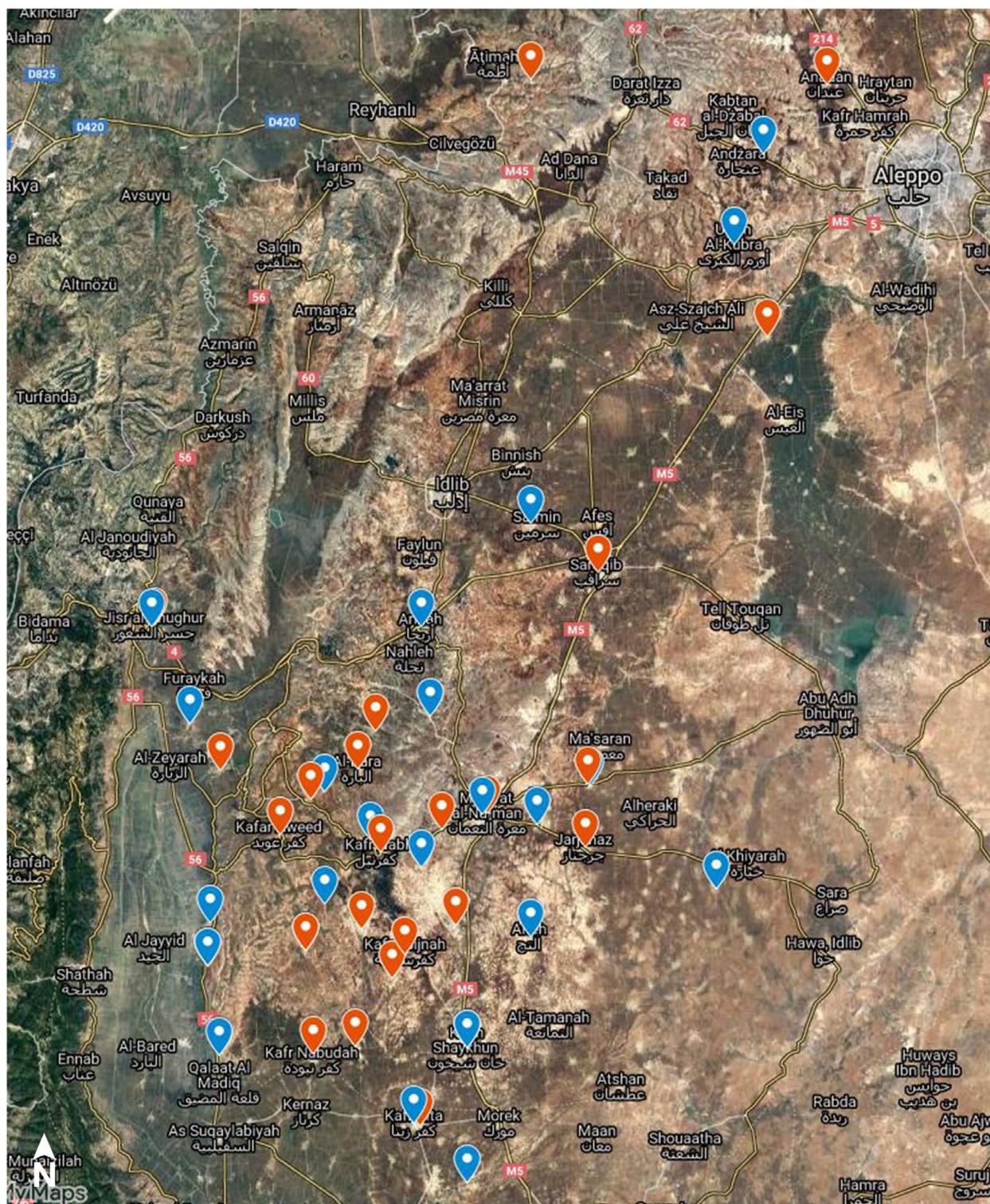
The map shows that the highest number of targeted facilities was in Idlib governorate, where 45 facilities were attacked, followed by Hama governorate with 11 facilities, while May 2019 was the month which saw the highest documented number of attacks on medical facilities in a one-month period, with 28 such incidents perpetrated by Syrian-Russian alliance forces.



Interactive map showing the distribution of medical facilities that were targeted by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in northwest Syria:



Interactive map shows the medical facilities that were targeted by Syrian- Russian alliance forces in northwest Syria between April 26, 2019 and February 8, 2020



VII. The Most Notable Attacks on Medical Facilities in Northwest Syria by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Since April 26, 2019

Kafranbel Surgical Hospital “formerly known as the Orient Hospital”:

The hospital, which is located in the north of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, is based in the building that previously housed the Cultural Center. It contains sections for ambulances, surgery, internal medicine, orthopedics and diagnostic imaging, in addition to an analysis laboratory- part of which is fortified inside caves that were dug underground under the main hospital building. The hospital, which is supported by the Hand in Hand for Aid and Development Organization (HIHFAD), provides surgical and reproductive health services, benefiting approximately 6,500 people per year. The hospital was subjected to five attacks, two by Syrian Regime forces and three by Russian forces. 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.

The first incident: On Sunday, May 5, 2019, at around 16:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, carried out four raids using missiles that directly targeted the 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.





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

The SNHR contacted media activist Bilal Bayyoush¹, from Kafranbel city, who headed to an area near the hospital and filmed the attack. He told us: **“After the first attack was carried out by the warplanes, I left my home immediately and headed to an area near the hospital - about 200 meters away - and installed my camera there. Then I monitored the warplane’s carrying out three other raids with three missiles, with a difference of 6-7 minutes between each, on the hospital. The four missiles targeted the hospital and the first two landed at the hospital gate, causing its destruction.”**

Asked about the warplane that carried out the attack, Bilal said: **“We learned from the observatories that the warplanes were Russian which took off from Hmeimim Airbase, and I myself can now distinguish a Russian warplane by its size, color and method of conducting raids.”** Bilal confirmed to us that there was no military presence in the area at the time of the attack.

The second attack: On Thursday, July 4, 2019, at around 14:30, Syrian regime helicopters dropped three barrel bombs on the Kafranbel Surgical Hospital. The first barrel bomb fell directly at the hospital’s entrance, while the other two fell around 20 meters from the entrance. That attack was followed by an air raid by Syrian regime warplane using a missile, which also directly hit the hospital’s entrance. These attacks caused significant destruction to the hospital entrance, and inflicted moderate material damage to its cladding.

¹ Via WhatsApp on November 25, 2019



The SNHR contacted Rami al Fares², one of the medical staff working at the hospital, who was there when the attack occurred: **“While I was in my department making a call to one of my relatives, the place suddenly lit up and I felt a great pressure that tossed me several meters away. I woke up from the shock after a few minutes and discovered that a barrel bomb had fallen directly at the entrance of the hospital, followed by two other barrel bombs, with about ten minutes between the two incidents. About 15 minutes after the third barrel bomb, the area was subjected to three airstrikes from warplanes which, I later learned from my colleagues, belonged to the Syrian regime. The first missile also hit the hospital entrance directly; no one among the personnel was injured as a result of the attack, but the damage was limited to the entrance that almost completely collapsed.”** Rami added that he left the hospital after the attack ended and saw the casing of the barrel bomb along with metal parts and metal balls also whose weight ranges between 100 - 3000 grams, all of which were inside the barrel bomb. Rami assured us that the area was free of any military presence at the time of the attack.

The third incident: On Sunday, July 21, 2019, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs that landed in front of the entrance to the Kafranbel Surgical Hospital, which works on an emergency system, causing moderate material damage to the hospital's building and equipment.

The fourth incident: On Friday, August 23, 2019, fixed-wing (Su-24) Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles that landed near Kafranbel Surgical Hospital, which works on an emergency system, causing minor material damage to the hospital's furniture.

The fifth incident: On Wednesday, November 6, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian fired a missile at the Kafranbel Surgical Hospital's entrance, partially destroying the hospital entrance, and causing moderate material damage to its equipment.

Dar al Hekma Hospital

The hospital, which is [located](#) in the center of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, is a public hospital [licensed](#) by the Syrian regime's Health Directorate. 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.

² Via WhatsApp on December 14, 2019



The first incident: On Tuesday, May 28, 2019, at around 10:00, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles coinciding with artillery bombardment using missile launchers by regime ground forces around Dar al Hekma Hospital, [partially destroying the hospital building](#), and causing [extensive material damage](#) to [its furniture](#), [sections and equipment](#), putting it out of service. We note that the greatest damage in the hospital was caused by the missiles fired by missile launchers after they fell nearby.



The second incident: On Monday, November 4, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to bomb an area near the hospital, damaging the hospital building. We note that the hospital was out of service at the time following the previous attack.

Heesh Dispensary:

The dispensary, which is [located](#) northwest of Heesh village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, provides first aid and vaccination. 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.

On Saturday, June 15, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles near Heesh Dispensary, causing severe destruction to the building, as well as [inflicting moderate material damage](#) to the equipment. We note that the dispensary management has now suspended work at the facility due to the continuing military campaign carried out in the region.





Destruction caused by an air attack by the Syrian regime near Heesh Dispensary in Heesh village, Idlib – June 15, 2019

Adnan Kiwan Children's and Women's Hospital:

The hospital, which is [located](#) in the center of Kansafra village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, specializes in gynecology and pediatrics, and is supported by the Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA). We note that the hospital is [licensed](#) by the Syrian regime's Ministry of Health and is included in its directory.

Since April 26, 2019, the hospital has been subjected to two attacks, one by Syrian Regime forces and the other by Russian forces. Kansafra village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incidents.

The first incident: One Friday, September 13, 2019, Syrian Regime artillery forces fired a shell that landed in front of the hospital, causing moderate [material damage](#) to the hospital building.



Damage caused by a ground attack by the Syrian regime on Adnan Kiwan Hospital in Kansafra village, Idlib – September 13, 2019



The second incident: On Sunday, November 24, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the hospital. [The missiles directly targeted the hospital building](#), [severely destroying its building](#), and [causing significant material damage to its equipment and furniture](#), putting it [out of service](#). The Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA) issued [a statement](#) condemning the targeting of the hospital on their official website.



Al Eman Children's and Women's Hospital:

The hospital, which is [located](#) to the southwest of Urm al Kubra village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, includes a pediatric clinic, an incubator section, a center for malnutrition treatment, a gynecology clinic, a natural and caesarean births section and a gynecological surgery section, as well as laboratories and a pharmacy. The hospital, which is supported by HUMAN APPEAL for Relief and Development, provides services to nearly 60.000 women and children per year. Urm al Kubra village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, August 31, 2019, at around 00:31, a fixed-wing warplane, which we believe was Russian, took off from Hmeimim airbase in the suburbs of Latakia governorate flying towards the southeast. At around 00:56, it fired at least six missiles in the vicinity of the hospital. The attack injured six children, [in addition to](#) causing the [partial destruction](#) of [the hospital building](#), as well as [inflicting severe material](#) damage to [the hospital equipment](#) and [an ambulance belonging](#) to it. Following the shelling of the hospital, patients were evacuated to other medical facilities and its work was suspended. We note that a ceasefire in the area declared by the Russian regime came into effect after the attack at 06:00 on the same day.





Damage to babies' incubators following an air attack which we believe was Russian on the perimeter of al Eman Children's and Women's Hospital in Urm al Kubra town, Aleppo - August 31, 2019

The SNHR contacted Dr. Mustafa Barakat³, the director of al Eman Hospital in Urm al Kubra town, who told us that at around 01:00 on Saturday, August 31, 2019, the area around the hospital was exposed to six consecutive raids, with each coming around five minutes after the preceding one. He added: **“When the warplane launched the raid, I was in my house, which is about one kilometer from the hospital, and I heard the sound of a light explosion, as a result of which one of the alternate nurses told me that the hospital was being bombed and that the observatories had circulated reports that the aggressor warplane is a Russian one, and that it was still in the air and would repeat the bombing. So, I directed the hospital’s personnel to go to lower levels and rushed to get to the place; however, the Civil Defense members and I were unable to get close, and the medical staff and patients were unable to leave the hospital because of the continued shelling.”** Dr. Mustafa added that he learned from the medical staff upon his arrival that a Russian warplane had carried out two raids three meters from the west side of the hospital, another raid six meters from the north side, and two more raids from the east side. He said: **“The raids caused great damage to the hospital equipment and damaged several incubators in the pediatric section. Also, part of the hospital’s surrounding wall was demolished, and some of the windows, doors, fuel tanks, generators and vehicles belonging to the doctors were destroyed. The missiles also left five craters in the vicinity of the hospital, about five to six meters deep, with a radius of about seven meters. The hospital was completely put out of service.”** Dr. Mustafa stressed that the area where the hospital is located is free of any military headquarters or presence.

³ Via WhatsApp on September 9, 2019



Al Ikhlas Children's and Women's Hospital:

The hospital, which is [located](#) southeast of Shnan village in Jabal al Zaweya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, includes pediatric and gynecological sections, an internal pediatric clinic, a vaccine center, a laboratory and a pharmacy. Shnan village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, November 5, 2019, at around 23:55, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched an air raid, firing two missiles that landed near the hospital; the warplanes subsequently launched a second air raid firing two more missiles shortly afterwards at around 00:20 on November 6, targeting the hospital building directly and injuring two medical personnel, [in addition to severely destroying the hospital building](#), [igniting fire](#) in a part of [the hospital](#), and [inflicting significant](#) material damage to its equipment, furniture and an ambulance belonging to the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), putting the hospital out of service.



Visual guide showing the site of an air attack, which we believe was Russian, on al Ikhlas Hospital in Shnan village, Idlib:



Adham Hamrin, a nurse from Me'rata village, who was working in the ambulance department of al Ikhlas Hospital in Shnan village, was suffocated by the fire that broke out in the hospital as a result of the attack. Adham⁴ told us: **“I woke up a few minutes before midnight on November 6 to the sound of a huge explosion that rocked the area. I later learned that this was the explosion of two missiles, one of which fell 50 meters east of the hospital, while the other fell a little further away than the first one. The bombing injured a number of the hospital’s reviewers. We gave them first aid, then we immediately started evacuating the nursing mothers, infants in the incubators, and staff from the hospital.”** Adham said that he then returned with one of his colleagues to the hospital

⁴ Via WhatsApp on November 13, 2019

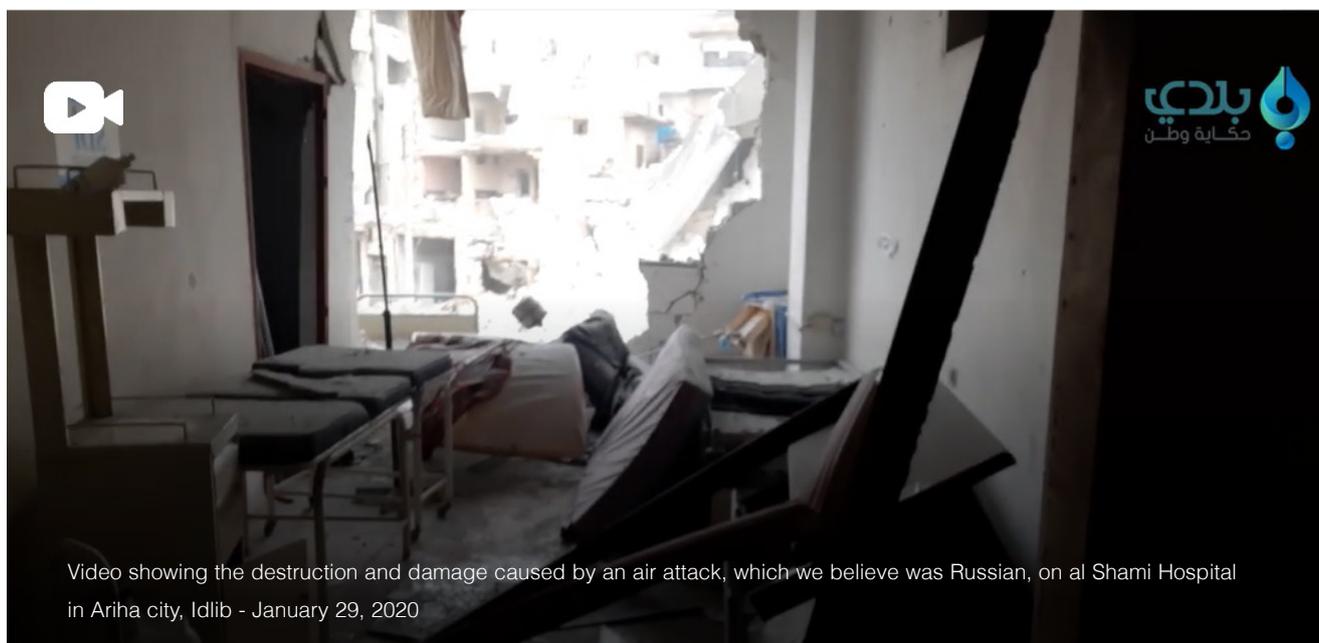


to make sure that it was empty: **“After we arrived, the aircraft returned to carry out a raid with two missiles that hit the hospital building directly, causing its destruction and igniting fire in it; we were able to get out only after the arrival of the Civil Defense members and the people who extinguished the fire got us out.”** Adham added: **“The hospital was severely destroyed in most of its sections, generators and equipment, and an ambulance was damaged. It is currently out of service.”**

Al Shami Hospital:

Known as Ariha Surgical Hospital, it is [located](#) north of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, and specialized in general, gynecological and obstetric surgery, being [licensed](#) by the Syrian regime’s Health Directorate. 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.

On Wednesday, January 29, 2020, at around 22:40, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched three consecutive missile strikes on the hospital and the surrounding area, resulting in the death of one of the hospital’s medical personnel, [in addition to](#) causing [extensive destruction](#) to [its building](#), and [inflicting significant material damage](#) to [its equipment](#), putting it [out of service](#). We note that the bombardment caused a massacre of IDP civilians as a result of targeting one of the residential buildings adjacent to the hospital.



Video showing the destruction and damage caused by an air attack, which we believe was Russian, on al Shami Hospital in Ariha city, Idlib - January 29, 2020



Al Huda Surgical Hospital:

The hospital, which is located in [Hour](#) village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was established in 2014 and has a fully equipped ambulance system, and also includes in-patients ward and sections for surgeries, general surgery, neurological, orthopedic, central care, radiology, CAT scans, pediatric medicine and incubators, in addition to a laboratory and pharmacy. The hospital, which is supported by the SKT Organization, provides services to nearly 250,000 people, treating around 6,000 people per month, and providing 13,000 free medical services per month. Hour village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, February 1, 2020, at around 10:40, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched two missile strikes on the hospital. The missiles fell in the middle of the hospital's yard, [partially destroying its building](#), and [causing significant](#) material damage to its equipment.



Destruction caused by an air attack we believe was Russian at the al Huda Surgical Hospital in Hour village, Aleppo - February 1, 2020

Anadan Dispensary:

The facility, which is located in [Anadan](#) city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, is supported by the Independent Doctors Organization (IDA). 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.



On Thursday, February 6, 2020, Syrian Regime artillery forces fired a shell at the dispensary, partially destroying the dispensary's perimeter wall, and causing moderate material damage to its equipment and furniture.



VIII. The Responsibility to Protect Civilians in Syria

For nine years, the Syrian regime has committed heinous crimes and violations against Syrian civilians on a daily basis. It has also consistently failed to comply with any of the demands of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, or those of the High Commission for Human Rights, or even Security Council resolutions. The Security Council, which is supposed to take collective measures and action under Article 41 and 42 of the Charter of the United Nations, has 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 its responsibility to protect civilians, but committed the most egregious violations against them, reaching the level of crimes against humanity, and extermination within detention centers through torture.

In a 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 routinely 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 sieges against 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 also affirmed in the aforementioned 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.**”

At the 2005 Summit, states unanimously agreed that each country had a responsibility to protect its population from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from egregious crimes, or itself is committing such crimes as in the case of the Syrian regime, it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner.

IX. 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 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 protect 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.

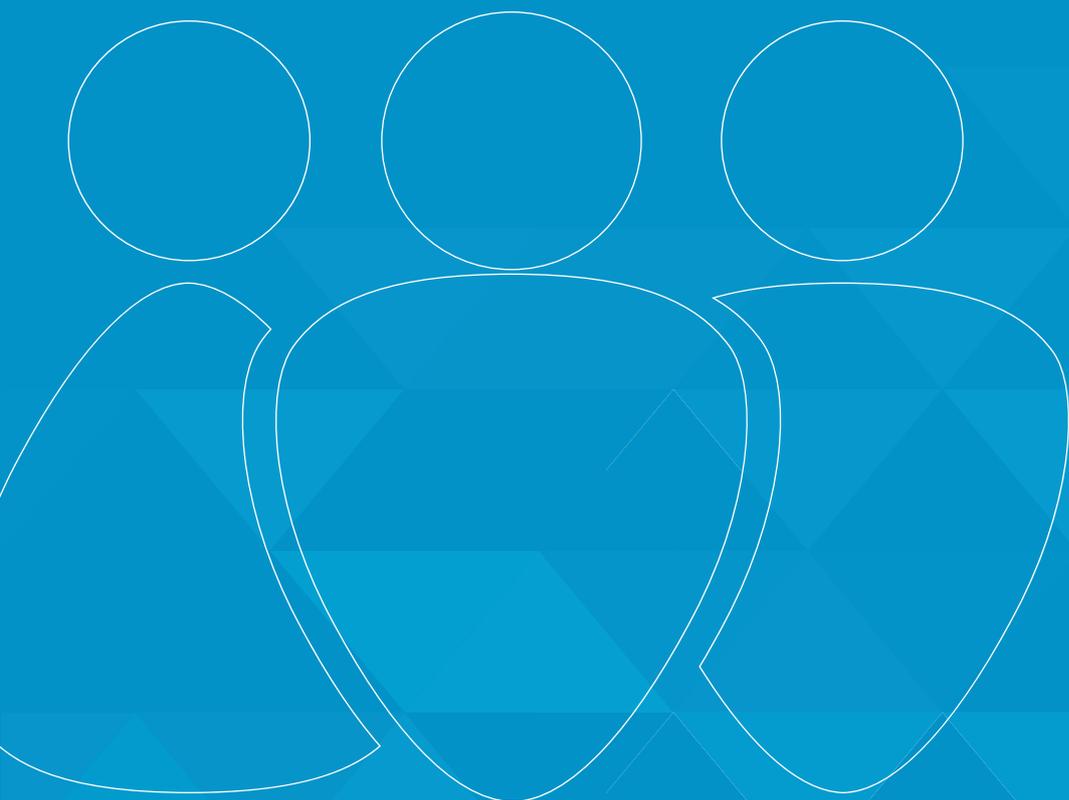
The Russian Regime:

- 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

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





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