

Statement

The Most Violent Cyber-Attacks in Years against the Syrian Network for Human Rights Website, with 414 Threats Per Day

Attacks Escalated after the Sixth Annual Report on Violations by Russian Forces and the Announcement of SNHR’s Holding a High-Level Event on Accountability on the Sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly Meetings

I. The Work of the Syrian Network for Human Rights Exposes and Condemns the Perpetrators of Violations in Syria:

For ten years, since its foundation in June 2011, [the Syrian Network for Human Rights \(SNHR\) has worked](#) to document violations against Syria’s citizens and state. Through years of exhaustive daily documentation, we have accumulated an extensive database of various types of violations, which SNHR analyzes, and on which it publishes daily news bulletins and reports, as well as identifying and exposing the perpetrators, in preparation for holding them accountable and protecting the collective memory from distortion, which contributes to preventing the recurrence of violations, and to advocating for the rights of victims and defending them.

In addition, the SNHR shares primary data with many UN and international bodies, partner international organizations, research centers, and local and international media. All of this has, for years, greatly angered the perpetrators of violations in Syria, who have reacted by attempting to slander and defame SNHR's reputation and by hurling baseless accusations, assisted by dozens of social media accounts, sites and pages, to such an extent that the Syrian regime even created an organization using the same name - the 'Syrian Network for Human Rights' - which it used for its benefit in its effort to cast doubt on SNHR.

Many of the parties in Syria have issued statements of condemnation, slanderous assertions, and accusations against the Syrian Network for Human Rights in response to reports we issued documenting and condemning their violations; none of the parties to the conflict resorted to responding methodically; the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) has issued numerous statements denying the violations we've documented, directing a long list of false accusations against us. As for the ISIS terrorist organization, it has sent us a large number of threatening messages since the SNHR was one of the first institutions to issue an expanded report exposing ISIS' methods and violations.

Since the Russian intervention in Syria began in September 2015, the SNHR has issued a number of reports documenting war crimes committed by Russian forces, which led to our website being subjected to cyber-attacks, as well as attempts to hack our account on the Twitter social networking platform, in addition to regular scathing and slanderous attacks by the Russian Foreign Ministry and pro-Russian media outlets ever since 2015. The number of reports issued by the SNHR on violations committed by Russian forces has now reached 92, all of which are available within a dedicated section on [our website](#).

II. Massive Cyber-Attacks Targeting the Syrian Network for Human Rights Website, with Russia the Most Prominent Suspect:

Since its inception, the Syrian Network for Human Rights website and our social media accounts have been subjected to many hacking attempts, which we have always been able to successfully counter, due to the great advantages of our website server, and the extensive experience of our IT team; we can confirm, however, that the recent attacks that we've been subjected to have been the toughest and most ferocious to date.

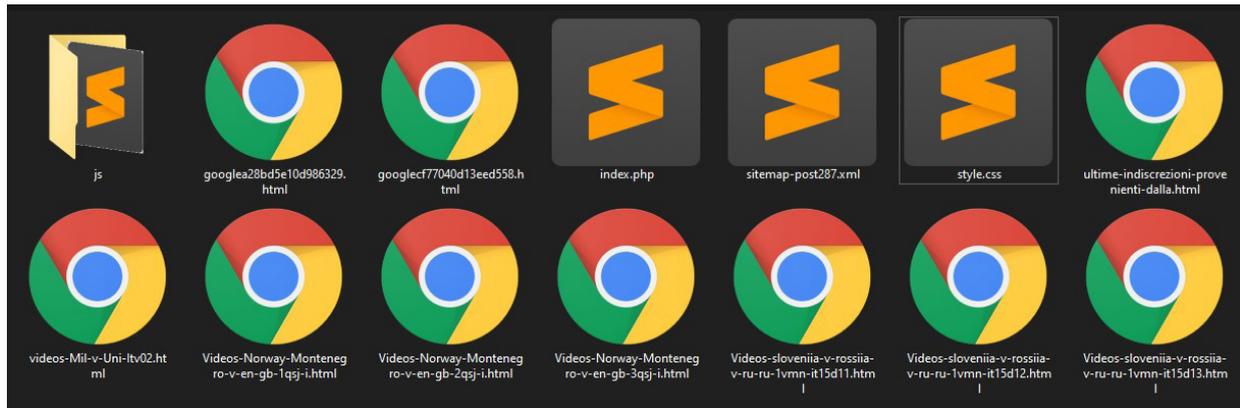
Fadel Abdul Ghany, Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:



There are many reasons for the perpetrators of violations to attack us continuously, but I think that our sixth annual report on the violations committed by the Russian forces in Syria, which is issued annually on September 30 marking the anniversary of Russia's initial military intervention in Syria, as well as the announcement on the first of this month [October, 2021] about us organizing a high-level event with the three most prominent Western countries - the United States of America, the UK, and France - addressing the issue of holding the perpetrators of violations accountable and the impossibility of normalizing the relationship with the Syrian regime, are perhaps additional factors that prompted further attacks on us, because the attacks occurred immediately after that.

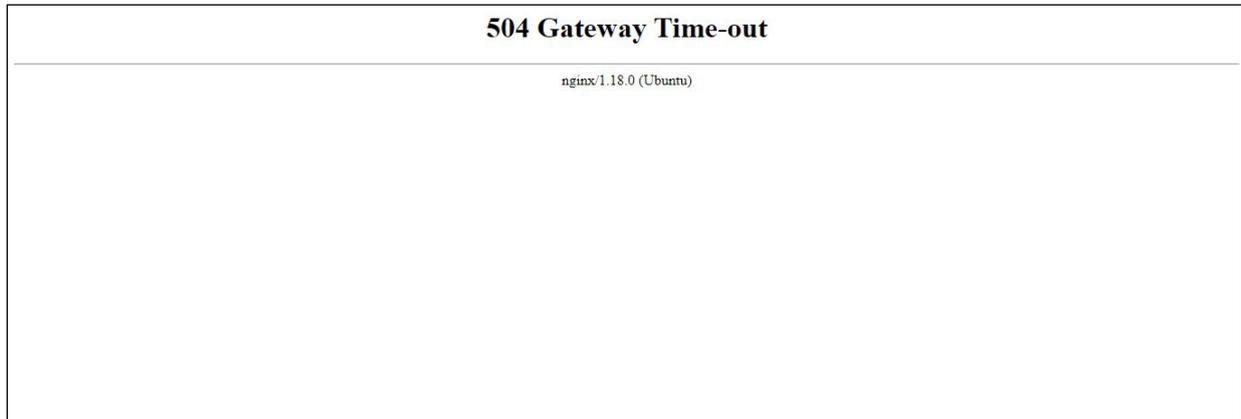
Our IT team believes that these coordinated and massive attacks are beyond the capabilities of the Syrian regime, the Syrian Democratic Forces, or the Armed Opposition factions, and we consider it far more probable that Russia is behind these attacks, particularly given its primary interest in eliminating and discrediting us.

The latest attacks began on Saturday, October 2, 2021 and caused severe difficulties for anyone visiting and browsing the website, displaying warning messages to everyone who wanted to visit the website warning that it was unsafe. We later found out that the attackers had managed to break through the server's firewall and additional protection programs, and implanted malware on the server.



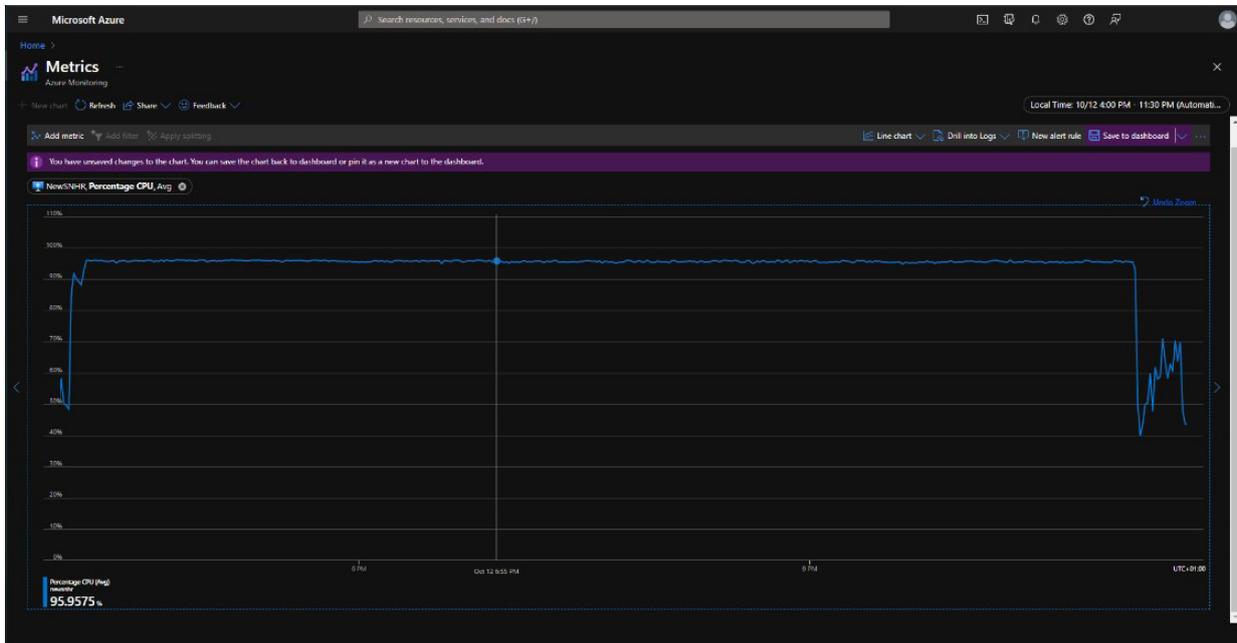
These massive attacks also caused distortion of the way the SNHR website was displayed when searching for it via global search engines such as Google and Bing.

These cyber-attacks continued and grew more severe, aiming to progress from simply obstructing browsing of the website to attempting to paralyze it and completely stop it from working. On October 6 and 7, hackers succeeded in bringing down the website for several hours, completely preventing it from working throughout that period. While we were trying to address these attacks, some software conflicts occurred, which increased the website's downtime.

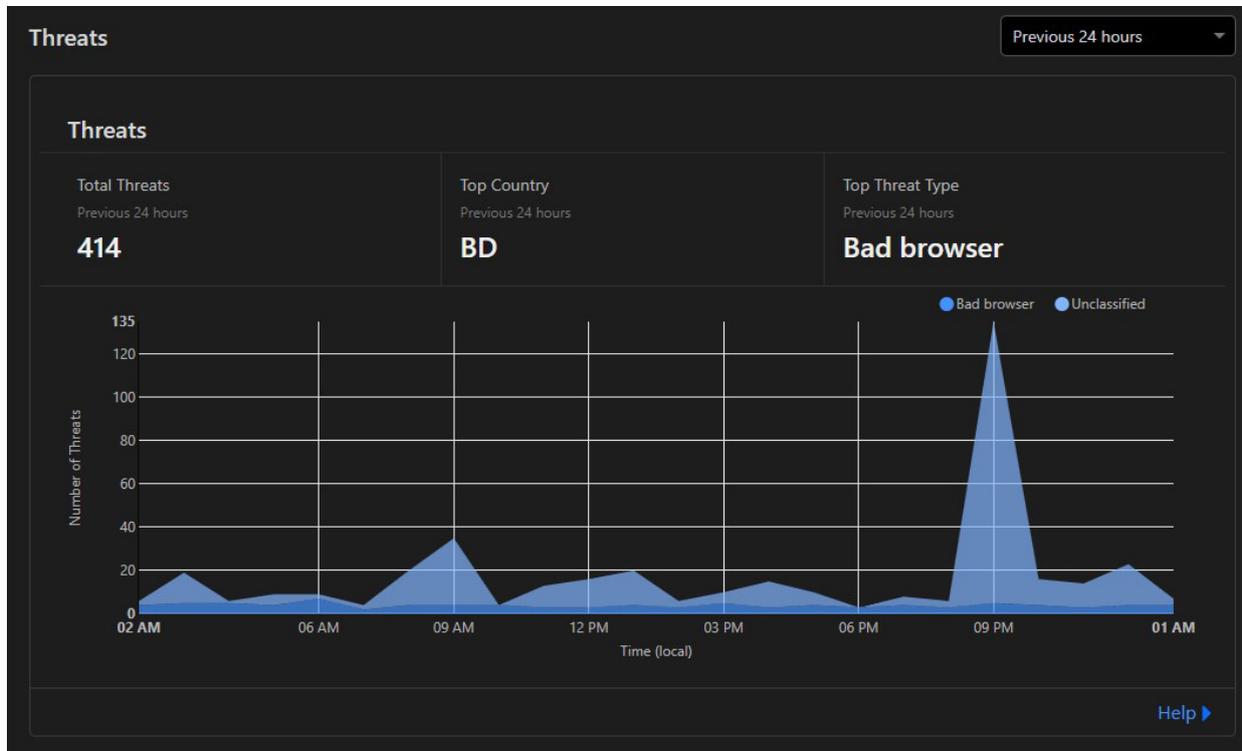


The following are some statements issued by specialist companies that show some of the [attacks on the Syrian Network for Human Rights website](#):

Azure statistics showing the attempts to pressure the server



The analysis shown in the following image from Cloudflare Security Services shows the persistence of attacks, which, in one day alone, reached an average of 414 potential threats within 24 hours.



According to Cloudflare, the main source of attacks was Bangladesh, then Germany, then Australia, then the United States of America. The following table shows the distribution of the record of attacks on the website according to country: it should be noted, however, that this record is most probably highly inaccurate since the attackers usually use a virtual private network - VPN - to conceal their identities and locations:

- **Bangladesh:** 128
- **Germany:** 90
- **Austria:** 45
- **The United States:** 44
- **Russian Federation:** 16

Top Threat Countries / Regions	
Previous 24 hours	
Country / Region	Requests
Bangladesh	128
Germany	90
Austria	45
United States	44
Russian Federation	16

The SNHR's IT team, through software on the server that is able to identify any modifications made to it, was able to geolocate the source of the malware implanted on the SNHR server as emanating from the city of Hong Kong, China. We were also able to geolocate several unsuccessful hacking attempts, which came from Russia, Malaysia, and the USA.

We have identified two email addresses associated with the source of the attacks (jackcboldens@gmail.com; rano791577@gmail.com), but these email addresses may be from hacked victims, and we are contacting Gmail to stop them permanently.

Over the past few days, our IT team has been able to successfully resist the massive attacks against us, clean the website of all the viruses that were implanted in preparation to hack it, and block all the devices that participated in the hack, which we identified as being the cause of the disabling of the server, with our website now fully restored and again working well as normal. We have also improved the server's firewall, adding additional tools and software to it, which contribute to blocking hacking attempts automatically, in addition to conducting continuous manual monitoring processes; while hundreds of cyber-attacks are still ongoing as of this writing, these are no longer able to stop the website.

Working in Syria and for the cause of Syrian freedom is fraught with challenges, threats and risks, and cyber-attacks are one of the most prominent threats facing us, serving as an important indicator of the extent of the impact that the Syrian Network for Human Rights has on the perpetrators of violations and of their strong desire to conceal and eliminate the evidence of their multiple violations. No matter how hard they try, however, we pledge, as defenders of human rights in our beloved country, Syria, to continue our struggle for liberation from dictatorship and tyranny, and to achieve a transition towards democracy and respect for human rights.

Thanks and Appreciation

The Syrian Network for Human Rights extends our sincere thanks to the many institutions, individuals, and media outlets who expressed their sympathy over the attacks we have been subjected to, and our gratitude for the offers from many of them who expressed their willingness to help confront these brazen and shameful attacks.