

Government Forces Use Cluster Munitions in bombing Yabrud

A Report Prepared by the Syrian Network for Human Rights SNHR

Date of Issue: March, 10, 2014

Field of the report: Documenting the use of the government forces of cluster munitions in bombing Yabrud in Damascus Countryside between Friday, 31 January, 2014 and Saturday, 1 March, 2014.

The report includes:

Introduction and Methodology

Deaths Caused by Cluster Munitions

Details of the Last Incident

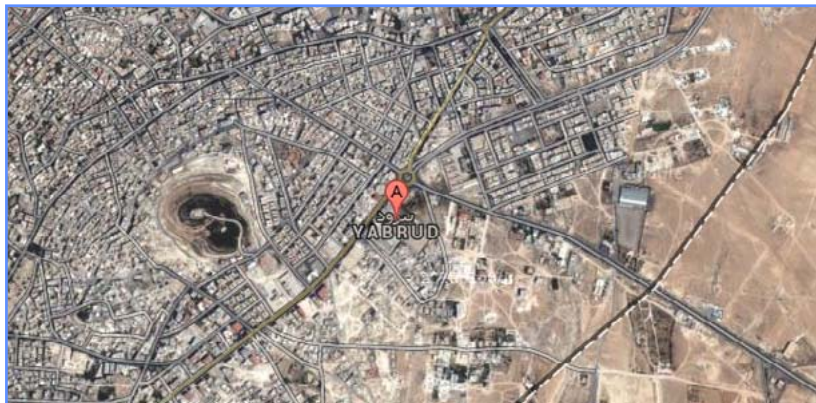
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Introduction and Methodology

The city of Yabrud is 80 KMs to the north of the capital Damascus. Here is a link that shows the location of the city:



The methodology of the report is based on interviews conducted by the team of SNHR with activists and eye witnesses from Damascus Countryside. The report contains a recorded account of one eye witness. The team of SNHR has also checked the pictures and videos provided by activists from the city who cooperate with us. Names of eye witnesses have been changed in the report according to their own wills. SNHR couldn't visit the area because of the ban posed by the government forces on human rights organizations.

Deaths Caused by Cluster Munitions

The Syrian government is determined to continue using cluster munitions that remain in the land for decades after use and may continue to cause civilians death, disability and destruction. Despite of the fact that more than 112 of the world countries condemned - through a decision taken by the UN general Assembly - the Syrian government for using cluster munitions against its people, this government is still using them. Lots of reports and studies have documented the government forces' use of cluster munitions in 9 Syrian governorates, the last of which the report issued by SNHR on the deaths caused by cluster munitions. Below is the link of the report on our website:

http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/cluster%20bombs%20english.pdf

Our dear colleagues in Human Rights Watch issued a number of reports that prove the widening use of cluster munitions by the Syrian government forces in its bombing of the Syrian governorates. They could specify – through huge efforts – seven kinds of cluster munitions used. This is a clear indication of the government forces' disdain for the International Law.

Today, a new area is added to the list of dangerous areas in Syria in which cluster munitions were used. The international community needs to send a strong message in this regard, as it has done in the case of chemical weapons, or the Syria government will continue using cluster munitions repeatedly without fear of being questioned or accounted for that.

Government forces have used cluster munitions in dozens of areas along 9 governorates, the last of which was during the attacks on Yabrud in the Damascus Countryside. These attacks caused the killing of 138 civilians, among them 64 children (48%) and 14 women (12%). This means that a total of 60% of the victims are women and children, while number of men is 48. Only 3 rebels which were killed which constitutes only 2.5 % of the total victims of the attacks.

Details of the Last Incident

Military air force - owned by the Syrian government and not by any other side - has bombed cluster munitions on Yabrud repeatedly in different days.

On Friday 31, January, 2014, military jets have bombed cluster munitions on Yabrud. Rockets fell close to the central market, causing the killing of one youth and injuring of 12. The next day, one female child was injured because of an explosion caused by one submunition that remained in the area after the attack.

On Thursday 6, February, 2014, the government forces used cluster munitions again in bombing Al Qa'a district injuring 4 children.

Number of activists and residents interviewed by SNHR said that the government forces continued to use cluster munitions abruptly over the next coming days until February, 17, 2014 which led to the killing of 6 people and injuring 23.

One doctor from Yabrud, who refused to give his real name, talked to SNHR about the bombing of the area with cluster munitions saying:

“Yabrud was bombed with cluster munitions, particularly the central market, where one man was killed and others injured. The next day, one small female child, when she was with her mother, kicked one of the submunitions causing it to explode. Close to them was a man. The three of them were injured. Injuries ranged from medium to dangerous. The three of them needed surgery. The child and the mother were injured in their feet; the man in the feet and the belly. His situation was the most dangerous. He needed emergency surgery in his belly.”

“On February, 6, 2014, the regime used cluster munitions again targeting this time places crowded with children. Four children were seriously injured that day. We took them to field hospitals. Some have got broken legs, others were injured in their bellies and one was injured in his genital organs. All of them were subjected to surgeries and they are in good conditions now.”

Appendixes and Attachments

A video that shows the bombing of cluster munitions by military jets:

A video that shows Egyptian rockets that contain cluster munitions

Pictures of the submunitions

https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B9dF5VO4iR18cm1EVzkzSzdiSHM/edit?usp=drive_web

Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of cluster munitions by the Syrian government forces is considered a violation of the principles of non-discrimination and equality in the International Human Rights Law and is considered a war crime.

Russian government and other governments must stop supplying the Syrian government with weapons because it is proved now that the Syrian government forces have used these weapons in making crimes against humanity and war crimes that targeted civilian citizens. On the other hand, the friends of the Syrian people must practice real pressure, economically and politically, on the Russian government for this purpose.

The European Union must put more pressure on the Security Council in order that the Syrian issue is turned into the International Criminal Court.

The United Nations must, from now on, prepare a comprehensive study on the areas hit by the Syrian government with cluster munitions in order to give warnings to the civilians living in these areas. The United Nations must also work quickly on illuminating the unexploded submunitions.

Acknowledgments

The Syrian Network for Human Rights acknowledges the efforts of the families of the victims, the witnesses, and the media and political activists. Their efforts were essential to producing the report on such a high level.

