

# No less than 412 Barrel Bombs in May 2017

The Syrian Regime is still Dropping Barrel Bombs despite the De-Escalation Agreement

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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



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## I. Introduction

The fourth round of negotiations was held in Astana city, Kazakhstan's capital, on 3 and 4 of May 2017. Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives attended as the sponsoring states of Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. The three states agreed on establishing four de-escalation zones, wherein the agreement is to commence on May 6, 2017. The agreement outlined four major de-escalation areas – Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and al Quneitra governorates in the southern parts of Syria. It was provided that an expert committee would accurately assign the borders of said zones at a later date. The agreement provided for a cessation of combat operations, passage of humanitarian aids, and for IDPs to go back to their areas. Since the agreement went into effect, these areas saw a relatively noticeable and good decrease in killing rates compared with the previous months since March 2011.

Nonetheless, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture, and the use of barrel bombs. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the Russian, Turkish, and Iranian sponsors- won't see are still going on as nothing has changed.



In May 2017, we recorded a drop in the numbers of barrel bombs dropped by Syrian regime by 56% compared to last April, while the same percentage didn't exceed 16% when compared to what was documented in last March.

Vitaly Churkin, the former Russian representative to the United Nations, said that the Syrian regime has stopped using barrel bombs. However, the daily monitoring and documentation conducted by SNHR prove, beyond any doubt, otherwise as the Syrian regime continues to kill and destroy Syria by dropping hundreds of barrel bombs. In this report, we are going to highlight the incidents in which we documented the use of barrel bombs particularly with place, date, and pictures. This report is a monthly report by SNHR.

A distinctively indiscriminate weapon with huge destructive impact, a barrel bomb doesn't only kill civilians but also terrorizes and displaces residents in light of the destruction it creates. Dropping barrel bombs from warplanes in this savage and primitive manner amounts to a war crime. Every barrel bomb dropped is considered a war crime.

According to SNHR's violation archive, the first notable use of barrel bombs by Syrian regime forces (Army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias) was on Monday, April 1, 2012 against the residents of Salqin city in Idlib governorate. Barrel bombs is a locally-made weapon which is used by Syrian regime forces due to the fact that it costs notably less than missiles and it has a huge destructive impact. The use of barrel bombs is based on the principle of free fall and it weighs sometimes more than one-fourth ton and it is a distinctively indiscriminate weapon. even if barrel bombs killed an armed man, this would be an accident as 99% of the victims killed by barrel bombs are civilians and the percentage of women and children victims varies between 12% to 35% in some cases.

Security Council adopted Resolution 2139 on February 22, 2016 which specifically condemns the use of barrel bombs: "cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs." Nonetheless, Syrian regime forces are still dropping tens of barrel bombs on armed opposition-held areas.

In some cases, we documented the use of barrel bombs that is loaded with poison gases by Syrian regime forces which is a violation of Security Council Resolution 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013, and Resolution 2209, adopted on April 6, 2015.



This report monitors the number of barrel bombs that were dropped across Syria, the death toll it causes, and the destruction of most notable vital facilities caused by barrel bombs. In light of the difficulties our teams encounter, it should be noted that this is the bare minimum of the actual magnitude of crimes.

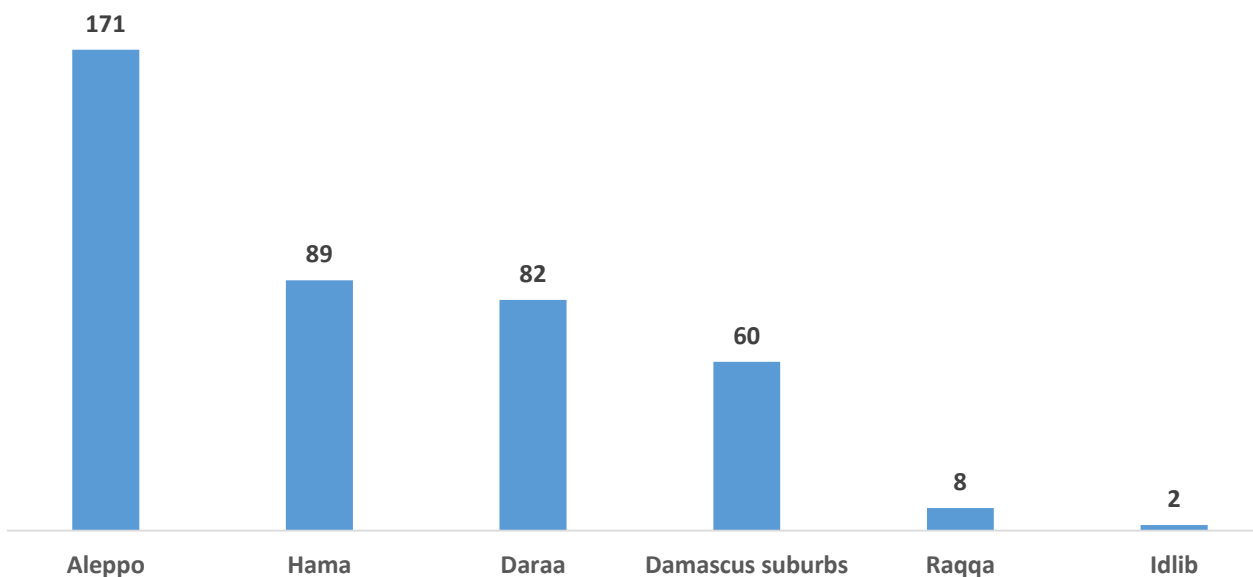
The only party that possesses warplanes and helicopters is the ruling regime. However, the regime denies that it is using barrel bombs the same way it denies perpetrating other violations such as murder, arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture among others. In contrast, the regime denies the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic access to Syria, and bans local and international human rights organizations and independent media. Therefore, this report doesn't include the remaining three parties (Self-management forces, extremist Islamic groups, and armed opposition factions) as none of them has an air force.

All the reports and studies done by SNHR show that most of the attacks were deliberately against residential areas and vital centers in order to demolish any chances to establish an alternative state and an alternative authority in the areas that are not controlled by Syrian regime forces. Otherwise, what is the point of targeting areas that are tens of kilometers away from the frontlines?

## II. Executive Summary

### A. Use of barrel bombs

Through daily monitoring and documenting, SNHR team was able to record that 412 barrel bombs at least were dropped in May 2017 by the Syrian regime forces helicopters. Those barrel bombs are distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



According to SNHR's victim documentation team, 30 civilians were killed in barrel bomb attacks, including 19 children and three women (adult female). The death toll is distributed as follows:

Aleppo: 14 civilians, including 10 children and two women.

Hama: eight civilians, including six children and one woman.

Daraa: four civilians, including two children.

Raqqa: Three civilians, including one child.

Damascus suburbs: one civilian.

### III. Details

#### **A. Most notable deaths caused by barrel bombs**

##### **Aleppo governorate**

Wednesday, May 10, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Smouma village in Maskana county, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which resulted in the killing of 14 civilians, including 10 children and two women. The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

##### **Hama governorate**

Tuesday, May 2, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of [barrel bombs](#) on [al Latamna town](#), northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, which resulted in the killing of seven civilians (five children and their parents). The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Thursday, May 4, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped three barrel bombs on al Latamna town, northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, which resulted in the killing of one female child. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

##### **Daraa governorate**

Monday, May 1, 2017, a female child died of wounds sustained in a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime helicopters which dropped eight barrel bombs on al Shayyah area, southern Daraa city, on April 30, 2017. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Friday, May 5, 2017, a civilian -special-needs person- died of wounds sustained in a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime helicopters which dropped eight barrel bombs on al Shayyah area, southern Daraa city, on April 30, 2017. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Friday, May 5, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped four barrel bombs on Ibta' town in middle suburbs of Daraa governorate, which resulted in the killing of one civilian. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Tuesday, May 23, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped four barrel bombs on Ibta' town, middle suburbs of Daraa governorate, which resulted in the killing of one child. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

### **Raqqa governorate**

Monday, May 8, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Debsi Afnan village, western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, which resulted in the killing of three civilians, including one child. The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

### **Damascus suburbs governorate**

Sunday, May 7, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped eight barrel bombs on Mazra'at Beit Jen, southwest of Damascus suburbs governorate, which resulted in the killing of one civilian. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

## **IV. Appendixes and Attachments**

Video showing a barrel bomb dropped by Syrian regime helicopters and its explosion in the agricultural lands of [al Latamna town](#), northern suburbs of Hama governorate – Monday, May 1, 2017

Video showing a [barrel bomb](#) dropped by Syrian regime helicopters and its explosion in al Latamna town, northern suburbs of Hama governorate – Tuesday, May 2, 2017

Video showing a barrel bomb dropped by Syrian regime helicopters and its explosion in [al Zalaqeyat village](#), northern suburbs of Hama governorate – Sunday, May 7, 2017

Video showing four barrel bombs being dropped by Syrian regime helicopters and their explosion in [Daraa al Balad area](#) in the middle of Daraa city, Monday, May 22, 2017



## V. Legal Conclusions and Recommendations

### Legal conclusions

1- The Syrian government has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and Security Council Resolution 2254. Syrian regime forces used barrel bombs in a widespread and systematic manner and violated, through the crime of willful killing, Article 7 of the Rome Statute in a widespread and systematic manner as well which constitutes crimes against humanity. Additionally, the Syrian government violated many rules of the international humanitarian law by perpetrating tens of crimes that amount to war crimes which manifested in the indiscriminate and random bombardment that was also disproportionate due to the use of excessive force.

2- SNHR can confirm that the bombardment using barrel bombs is an indiscriminate bombardment that targeted unarmed civilians. Thus, Syrian regime forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, considering that these crimes were perpetrated during non-international armed conflict, these crimes amount to a war crime where all the elements of a war crimes were fulfilled.

3-the Indiscriminate attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces are considered a violation of the customary humanitarian international law, where Syrian regime forces fired shells on residential areas and it wasn't directed against a specific military target.

4- These attacks, especially bombardment, have caused collateral damages that involved casualties, injuries, and great damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators that suggest that the damage was considerably excessive in relation to the estimated military benefit.

5- The magnitude of the widespread frequent bombardment, the excessive force, the indiscriminate manner, and the coordinated approach of these attacks must be based on high orders and a state policy.

6- Syrian regime forces, including all forms and leaders, are involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people in addition to those who provide Syrian regime forces with financial, political, and military support -such as the Russian government, the Iranian government, and the Lebanese group Hezbollah among others. Also, the companies that supply weapons are considered partners in these crimes and are subject to criminal prosecution.



## **Recommendations**

### **The Security Council**

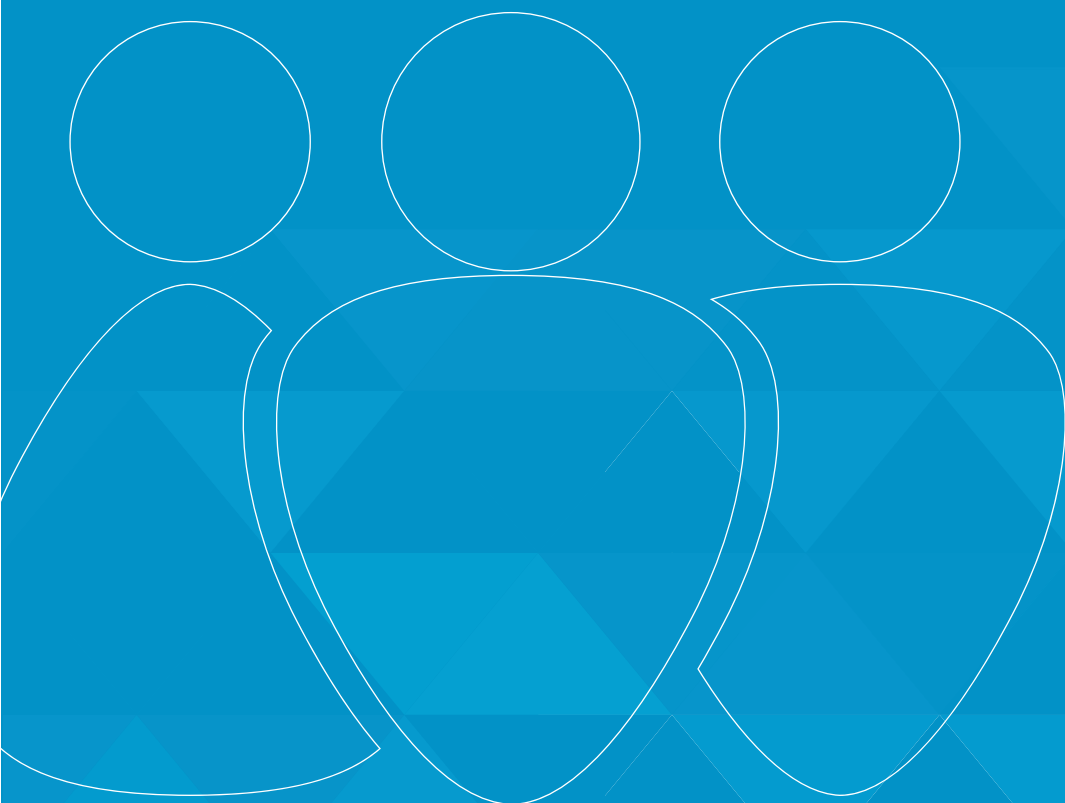
- The Security Council must insure the serious implementation of its Resolutions. These Resolutions have become merely words and, thus, the Security Council has lost all of its credibility and purpose.
- An arms embargo must be imposed on the Syrian government. Also, all those who supply it with weapons and funding must be prosecuted considering the risk that these weapons might be used to commit crimes and serious violations of human rights.
- In the Syrian case, The Security Council is the one who is authorized to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. However, the Security Council has been obstructing this procedure for five years instead of facilitating it and working on instilling peace and security in Syria. The prosecution of everyone involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes must commence immediately.

### **Acknowledgment and Consolation**

Our most heartfelt condolences for the families and friends of the victims, and our thanks go out to all local activists and families who contributed majorly to this study and the investigations.







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