



Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes are the reason behind the Forced Migration in Darayya Siege, Chemical Weapons, Barrel Bombs, and International Silence

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I. Introduction

One of the largest cities in Western Ghouta, Darayya city is located in Damascus suburbs governorate and is eight kilometers away from the capital Damascus. The city's location has a strategical importance given that it is located near the Al Mazze military airbase and the headquarters of the Air Force Intelligence which is within the airbase building.

Like other cities and areas that opposed the Syrian regime, Darayya city was bombed and destroyed. Additionally, the city homes were raided, and its people were killed, tortured, and arbitrarily arrested. We have documented lists that include the toll of all of the violations that occurred in Darayya. Nonetheless, the worst might be the Great Massacre; at the beginning of August of 2012, the city was excessively and brutally bombed, and on 20 August the city was raided by military vehicles, security forces, local militias, and the Syrian army. Over the course of seven years, these forces have committed all kinds of violations that amount to crimes against humanity where no less than 524 individuals were killed including 61 women and five children. SNHR published a report documenting the details of the raid and the field-executions that were carried out by government forces during that period of time in details.

In mid-November 2012, government forces imposed a complete siege on the city after a comprehensive military campaign, Immediately, the city started to suffer from the

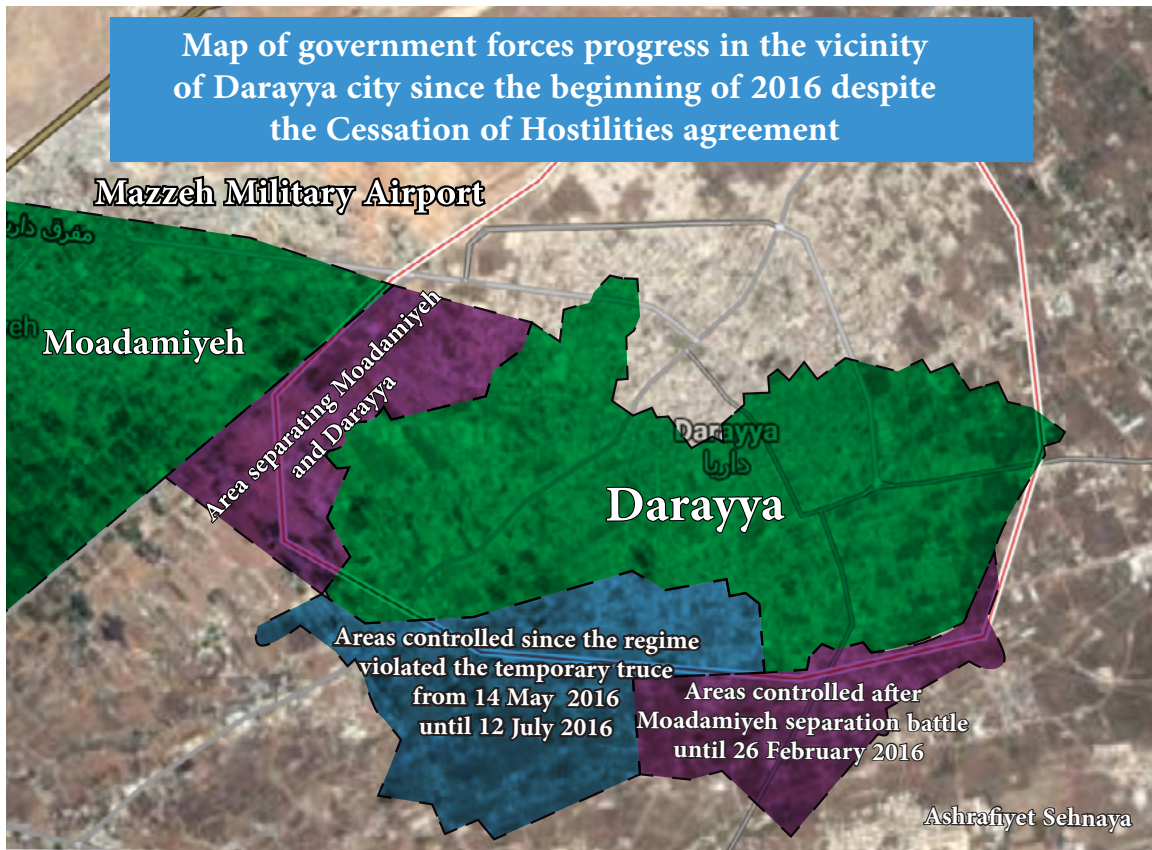




siege fallouts such as hunger and shortages in food and medicine. Along with the siege, the city was targeted almost daily using barrel bombs and missiles. Furthermore, we documented the use of chemical weapons, cluster munition, and barrel bombs loaded with flammable substance that was evidently napalm.

At the beginning of February 2016, government forces managed to separate Darayya city from Al Mua'damiya even though the Cessation of Hostilities agreement was signed at the end of February 2016. However, government forces violated the agreement multiple times; we are talking about various forms of violations including and most notably acquiring territories from other parties to the ceasefire, where the Syrian regime seized large areas of the agricultural lands in the southern and southwestern areas between May 2016 and July 2016 as territories of the armed opposition factions became less than four kilometers² in August 2016.

A map showing government forces' progress in the vicinities of Darayya city since the beginning of 2016 despite the Cessation of Hostilities statement.





II. Forcible Truces that Resulted in Demographic Change

All truces and reconciliations were implemented at the expense of negating the international humanitarian law. There would have been no need for any truce or reconciliation had the rules of the international humanitarian law had been implemented. All the truces and reconciliations, so to speak, were carried out under oppression and repression and in light of violating the international humanitarian law by siege, indiscriminate bombing, starvation, and prohibiting civilian residents and aids from getting into or outside the city. Under such conditions, the lesser of evils is to accept truces and reconciliations as no one would, under ordinary conditions, be willing to agree to a truce or a reconciliation with the ruling regime that violated many of these agreements and practiced in other cases the crime of enforced-migration which was carried out in a blatant manner in Homs, Darayya, and Banyas.

In Darayya which this report addresses, we will briefly highlight what the city has gone through since the beginning of the siege. We decided to start with the siege rather than the beginning of the popular uprising in the city as the siege and its fall-out were a primary cause for the rampant forced migration in the city.

Through the daily and cumulative documentation of the incidents in Syria, SNHR recorded that the following crimes took place in Darayya city between the beginning of the siege until 25 August

- Extrajudicial killing
- Barrel bombs
- Chemical weapons and cluster munition
- Targeting of vital facilities
- Enforced-disappearance
- Dying due to siege

This is the bare minimum and this is what we were able to document in light of the siege and the severity and magnitude of the violations. All incidents were documented by date, picture, place, and other details. We haven't included the destruction of buildings considering the difficulty to document such violations. Also, we haven't mentioned the psychological ramifications.





Fadel Abdul Ghani, chairman of SNHR, says:

“All these violations, which amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes in some cases, will only lead to an inevitable outcome which is agreeing to an agreement. From our standpoint, we can’t possibly call this a truce or a settlement. The most accurate description would be the law of the jungle. When the international law is violated and the dictator brags about that, we must be living under the law of the jungle that forced the residents of Darayya to flee their homes.”

After the original residents were forcibly migrated, local militias affiliated to the Syrian regime loot and ruin the houses and properties which was the case in Banyas and Homs where the residents of Banyas city didn’t return to their homes and their homes were taken by settlers that follow the Alawite sect that controls the ruling regime in Syria.

There have been drastic changes in the demography of Syria over the past six years as a result of the killing, indiscriminate and deliberate bombing, and destruction. No less than seven million people been displaced and have become refugees while 6.3 million people have become IDPs (Internally Displace persons). This situation is alarming and it is difficult to rectify this issue as it, sometimes, is getting worse while the United Nations and the international community are watching. Such demographic changes are dangerous and undoubtedly pose threats to the security of the entire region.

III. Most Notable Violations that Caused Forced Migration

These numbers cover the period of time between the beginning of the siege on Darayya city in mid-November 2012 and 25 August 2016. We outlined the most notable documented attacks that were carried out by government forces and its allies

A. Massacres and extrajudicial killing: We recorded the killing of 817 civilians including 67 children and 98 women.

B. Targeting of vital civil facilities: We recorded 56 incidents of attack against vital civil facilities.

C. Unlawful attacks (use of barrel bombs): We recorded no less than 7,864 barrel bombs.





D. Use of unlawful weapons:

- Chemical weapons: We recorded no less than eight chemical attacks.
- Cluster munition: We recorded no less than three attacks that involved the use of cluster munition.

E. Siege: We recorded that nine people died due to siege as follows:

- Food shortage: Six individuals including two children.
- Medicine shortage: Three individuals including one female child and one woman.

F. Enforced-disappearance: we recorded no less than 4,311 cases of enforced-disappearance.

IV. Details

A. Massacres and extrajudicial killing

SNHR documented the killing of no less than 817 civilians including 67 children and 98 women at the hands of government forces between mid-November 2012 and 25 August 2016. Also, one massacre was recorded.

Saturday 12 December 2015, government forces helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on the western neighborhoods of Darayya city in Damascus suburbs which resulted in the killing of six individuals at once including one woman and her unborn child.





B. Targeting of vital civil facilities

SNHR documented no less than 56 incidents of attacks against vital civil facilities in the city of Darayya at the hands of government forces between mid-November 2012 and 25 August 2016 as follows:

- 33 attacks against places of worship: 28 mosques and five churches and monasteries.
- 15 attacks against vital education facilities (schools)
- Seven attacks against vital medical facilities
- One attack against the civil defense center





Monday 19 November 2012, government forces rocket launchers fired a number of missiles at [Hazqeil mosque](#). As a result, the [mosque](#) was largely [destroyed](#) and was rendered out of commission.



Tuesday 23 July 2013, government forces artillery fired shells at Othman bin Affan mosque. As a result, the mosque and its furniture were [greatly damaged](#).

Thursday 30 January 2014, government forces helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Rahman mosque which [partially destroyed the mosque](#).

Friday 4 April 2014, government forces helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Omer ben Al Khattab mosque. As a result, the mosque was destroyed almost [completely](#) and was rendered out of commission.

Tuesday 12 January 2016, government forces artillery fired a mortar shell at Al Rahman mosque which punctured the dome of the mosque and resulted in mild damages.

Friday 19 August 2016, government forces helicopters dropped four barrel bombs loaded with flammable substances that is evidently napalm on the only [makeshift hospital in Darayya](#) city which caused a fire in the top floor of the hospital building and great damages to the hospital building and rendered it out of commission.





Saturday 30 January 2016, government forces helicopters dropped a barrel bomb in front of the civil defense center in the city. As a result, the center [building](#) was greatly damaged.





C. Unlawful attacks (use of barrel bombs)

Government forces escalated its use of barrel bombs where we documented no less than 7,846 barrel bombs between mid-November 2012 and 25 August 2016. 204 individuals were killed including 47 children and 24 women in barrel bomb attacks.

Also, government force used barrel bombs loaded with a flammable substance that is evidently napalm and expanded its use in August 2016 where we monitored multiple attacks one of which targeted the only makeshift hospital in the city.

Wednesday 28 October 2015, government forces helicopters dropped no less than 12 barrel bombs on the city resulting in the killing of three individuals including a woman and her son.

Saturday 21 November 2015, government forces helicopters dropped no less than 20 barrel bombs on the city resulting in the killing of four individuals; one child and three women.

Saturday 16 January 2016, government forces helicopters dropped no less than 12 barrel bombs on the city resulting in the killing of two civilians.

Sunday 26 June 2016, government forces helicopters dropped no less than 28 barrel bombs on Darayya city resulting in the killing of one civilian.

D. Unlawful weapons

- Chemical weapons: SNHR recorded no less than eight chemical weapons that were carried out by government forces between mid-November 2012 and 25 August 2016.

Monday 13 January 2014, government forces targeted the eastern part of Darayya city with three bombs loaded with a poison gas. As a result, four elements from the armed opposition factions were killed and 10 others were injured at least.

Tuesday 22 April 2014, government forces targeted the northern part of Darayya city with three bombs loaded with a poison gas which resulted in 10 injuries.





Thursday 26 March 2016, government forces targeted a group affiliated to armed opposition factions with hand grenades loaded with a poison gas. As a result, five individuals were injured.

- Cluster munition: SNHR documented the use of cluster munition in no less than three attacks that were carried out by government forces between mid-November 2012 and 25 August 2016.

Sunday 18 November 2012, a government forces fixed-wing aircraft dropped a missile loaded with PTAB-2.5M sub-munition on Darayya city. As a result, a number of residential buildings were damaged

[Video](#) showing the location where the cluster sub-munitions were dropped in Darayya city

[Video](#) showing one of the cluster remnants after the bombardment on Darayya city

E. Siege

Government forces has been besieging the city since mid-November 2012 after a wide military campaign. The lives of more than 8,300 individuals deteriorated as they relied on some crops and grass to survive.

The city hasn't seen any relief convoy since the beginning of the siege. At the beginning of June 2016, some of the relief convoys entered the city under the sponsorship of the United Nations. However, the convoy carried only small amount of food and supplies that wasn't sufficient considering the number of people who were living under siege.

The imposed siege on Darayya city resulted in the death of nine individuals as follows:

- Food shortage: Six individuals including two children.
- Medicine shortage: Three individuals including one female child and one woman.





F. Enforced-disappearance

Until this moment, there are still 4,311 forcibly-disappeared persons from Darayya where the regime arrested them and denied their existence. No one knows anything about their fate as of this writing. This number represent a great ratio in relation to the residents of Darayya city previously which is estimated at 160,000 people.

As a result of these systematic and widespread violations, the city was completely drained out. Therefore, the residents had no choice but to agree to the settlement that as proposed by the Syrian authorities. According to the settlement, all elements of the armed opposition factions had to leave for Idlib while the remaining civilians were transferred to special housing centers in Harjala area which is administratively affiliated to Al Kiswa city, located in Damascus suburbs and is under the control of government forces.

The migration process was divided into two stages on 26 and 27 August during which no less than 1500 elements of the armed opposition factions were transferred to Idlib city along with their families.

Pictures showing the evacuation process in Darayya city, 26 August 2016





V. Conclusions and Recommendations

SNHR believes that the forced migration was a result of systematic and widespread crimes that is similar, to a great extent, to the direct forced displacement through the use of weapons and violence. Certainly, the displacement of the resident of an entire city can't be justified by any military necessity.

Recommendations

The Security Council

- To bind the Syrian regime to cease the settlement and occupation process that is being carried out in the cities and neighborhoods whose residents have been displaced.
- To insure the refugees' and IDPs' right to return to their homes and to reacquire all of their lands and properties.
- The demographic changes threaten the region and the Syrian lands and will certainly lead to the disruption of security and stability. The Security Council must work on instilling peace and security in Syria as it is a fundamental part of its responsibilities and capabilities.

The Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commis-





sioner for Human Rights

To expand on the demographic change process and its ramifications in Syria and condemn the practices of the Syrian regime.

VI. Attachments

[The continuing siege of “Daraya” and “Al Wa’er Neighborhood”: Repeated Violations of the Cessation of Hostilities and the Security Council Resolutions](#)

[More than 330 barrel bombs on Daraya alone](#)

[Syrian Government prevent medicine and flour in Eastern Ghouta, Darayya and, Al Mua’damiyet](#)

Acknowledgment

Our most sincere thanks and appreciation to all the families, activists, and eyewitnesses of Darayya city who majorly contributed to this report.

