



SNHR

# Documentation of the Syrian Regime's Killing of 65 Civilian Residents of Hama Governorate on the 'Children of Freedom Friday'

Live Bullets Answered Demonstrators Bearing Roses, Killing Children

Friday 15 July 2011

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.

**SNHR**  
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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## I. Introduction:

By June 2011, the popular uprising that began in mid-March of that year had expanded to include many more Syrian citizens despite the threat of death, arrest and enforced disappearance by Syrian regime forces against anyone who dared to participate in demonstrations against the Assad family's tyrannical hereditary rule. From the very first moments of the popular uprising, the Syrian regime chose to confront peaceful demonstrators demanding freedom, dignity and a transition from dictatorship to democracy with murderous iron and fire; according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) database, in the four weeks from March 15, 2011, up until April 14, 2011, the day of the 'Great Friday', at least 277 civilians were killed, and 1,437 others were arrested.

The uprising was distinguished from the first days by the demonstrators organizing major popular demonstrations on Friday of every week, with each of these demonstrations given a title chosen by popular vote expressing the slogans that the demonstrators across the country would chant in all the Syrian governorates; throughout this time, the Syrian regime continued its efforts to brutally crush the uprising and intimidate the people back into silence, using live bullets, arrests and torture, which assumed a systematic and widespread nature, amounting to crimes against humanity according to a [report](#) issued by Human Rights Watch on Wednesday, June 1, 2011.

On Thursday, June 2, 2011, [the then-United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said](#) that at least 70 people had been killed in Syria in the previous week due to the regime's crackdown on demonstrations.

On Friday, June 3, 2011, mass demonstrations took place in several cities and governorates of Syria under the title 'Children of Freedom Friday', with the regime's security services confronting these demonstrations with live bullets.

### **Methodology:**

In this report, we document the attack launched by forces affiliated with the Syrian regime, through deliberate and direct shooting against peaceful demonstrators who gathered in the center of Hama city on Friday, June 3, 2011.

The report relies on the accounts obtained by SNHR through directly speaking with eyewitnesses and survivors of the attack, none of which are cited from any open sources, with this report including four of these testimonies. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without us offering or providing them with any incentives.

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, regime forces shooting at unarmed civilian demonstrators, while other videos show demonstrators carrying roses, the sites of the attacks, the bodies of victims, injured people, and a state of panic among civilians caused by these attacks. Readers are welcome to find out more about SNHR's [methodology](#).

## II. Documentation of the Attack on Peaceful Demonstrators in Hama City and Identifying the Syrian Regime's Responsibility:

Hama city is the center of Hama governorate, which is situated in the center of Syria. Before the outbreak of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011, its population was approximately 850,000. The people of Hama city joined the uprising from its first days, with popular demonstrations taking place mainly on Fridays, as was the case in many cities in most of the Syrian governorates. A feature that distinguishes Hama city is that al Asi River divides the city into two halves, namely al Hader and al Souq areas, with each of these two areas witnessing demonstrations by the people; it was planned that the demonstrations on Friday, June 3, 2011, the 'Children of Freedom Friday', would head from various neighborhoods on both sides of the city to meet in al Asi Square in the city center.

On the afternoon of Friday, June 3, tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators, estimated at around 60,000 in total by some of those we spoke with, set out from various neighborhoods of Hama city towards al Asi Square in the city center, with the aim of holding a peaceful rally. The organizers of the demonstration deliberately asked dozens of demonstrators to carry roses symbolizing the benevolent nature of the demonstrations and the peaceful wishes for all Syrians, including the security services; the security forces stationed in and around the city square responded by firing directly at the defenseless demonstrators as they headed towards the square. The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented the deaths of 65 civilians, including seven children, in addition to the injury of a large number of others.

### Victims' names:

 <p>SNHR SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان</p> <p>DNHR have documented the deaths of 65 civilians, including seven children, when the security forces stationed in the square of Hama city "Assi Square" and its vicinity opened fire directly at protesters heading to the square on Friday, June 3, 2011</p> <p>1. Ahmad al-Saleh 2. Ahmad al-Saqqa 3. Ahmad al-Nabhan, a 15-year-old child 4. Ahmad al-Harbi, a 15-year-old child 5. Ahmad Mousam, a 13 year-old child 6. Ahmad Mansoud Saqr</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>7. Ayman al-Faqi 8. Ayman Murtala al-Yousif, a 21 year-old man from Janoub al-Malibah</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzHf4tX4kV8&amp;feature=youtu.be">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzHf4tX4kV8&amp;feature=youtu.be</a></p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>9. Tayyib Mohammad al-Khal 10. Tayyib Ghazi 11. Tamer al-Saleh 12. Zakaria al-Banat 13. Sadeem al-Kurd 14. Saeed al-Saleh Ayyash 15. Abdul Hadi al-Thekre 16. Abdul Rahman Salameh 17. Abdul Salam Khatib Karim al-Aqqad 18. Abdul Razzaq Muhammed Dab'oun 19. Abdul Qader al-Shami 20. Abdul Qader al-Saleh 21. Abdul Qader Hawana</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>22. Obaidah Muhammad Arnout, a 26-year-old architectural engineer from al-Hendidiya neighborhood</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p>	<p>23. Abd Qader Tarabulayeh 24. Iman Faris, a child 25. Omer al-Labbadi 26. Omer Mahmoud al-Shari, a 24 year-old man from al-Tawaniya neighborhood</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>27. Omer Mahmoud Makhmouch, a 32 year-old man from Janoub al-Malibah</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>28. Farhat Terkawi 29. Firas al-Saleh 30. Kamal Muhibat Thetka 31. Maher Abu Khalafouf 32. Majeed al-Saleh, a child from al-Jema village 33. Muhammed Meneera, a child</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>34. Muhammed al-Den 35. Muhammed al-Jabri 36. Muhammed Jarrah 37. Muhammed Jumaa Khatib 38. Muhammed Attar 39. Muhammed Farhan al-Terkawi 40. Muhammed Farhan al-Terkawi 41. Muhammed Noor al-Masri 42. Muhammed Noor al-Masri, a 30 year-old man 43. Muhammed Ahmad Idris, a 30 year-old man from Sharqaya neighborhood 44. Muhammed Ahmad Idris, a 30 year-old man from Sharqaya neighborhood 45. Muhammed Suleiman Mabarek 46. Muhammed al-Musa, a 20 year-old man 47. Ismail al-Saleh al-Masri 48. Yousef Jumrah 49. Mayada al-Saleh Sader 50. Nasir Musa 51. Seid Mandoub al-Shabani 52. Ali Mousa, a child 53. Muhammed al-Douri 54. Ahmad al-Saleh 55. Hisham Suleim, 30 year-old child from Douma city in Damascus suburbs governorate, died due to wounds (June 8, 2011)</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwvQWQ9R5MTHN6Lw/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>56. Ahmed Khalid Shukri Iyad, from Mid area of Hama city in Idlib governorate, died due to wounds (June 8, 2011) 57. Ayman Mohammad Khairudin Lutfi 58. Muhammed Zaki 59. Anis al-Messi 60. Muhammed al-Khalaf 61. Muhammed al-Khalaf 62. Muhsin Ali al-Asfar 63. Anis al-Messi 64. Ahmad Adhmar 65. Muhsin Mustafa Ajghus</p>
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A number of eyewitnesses whom we spoke with told us that many demonstrators were carrying roses, symbolizing the peaceful nature of the gathering, and that a number of demonstrators had approached the security forces and given them roses, in a message of goodwill and reassurance that this gathering was completely peaceful.

Abdullah Bassam, an activist in the popular uprising, who was among the demonstrators on the day of the massacre, said: "**When I arrived near the Ba'ath Party branch, we found that a group of young men had formed something like a human circle by holding each other's hands around the Ba'ath Party branch, while the security forces were deployed within the perimeter wall of the branch, and were facing towards the demonstrators, in an attempt to prevent any random approach to the government building, while another group of demonstrators was distributing roses to the crowd of demonstrators flowing past.**"

Our investigations indicated that members affiliated with Syrian regime forces, [who were dressed in military and civilian uniforms](#), were responsible for this attack, including snipers and security personnel, in addition to local pro-regime militias. Most of the accounts we obtained confirmed the involvement of Military Intelligence forces in the shootings, with the bullets being shot directly at the demonstrators; we believe that there was a clearly premeditated purposeful mens rea by the Syrian regime to inflict the largest possible number of victims among the civilian demonstrators, based on the following:

**One:** Syrian regime forces set up barricades and checkpoints (military posts) at all the main entrances leading to al Asi Square.

**Two:** Armed security personnel, among whom were probably snipers, were deployed on the rooftops of tall government and civilian buildings overlooking al Asi Square or the main streets leading to it, such as the Hama Governorate Building, the Hama Police Command Building, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (Hama branch) building, and the Arab Cultural Center building.

**Three:** Armed security personnel were deployed at the building of the Ba'ath Party branch, in the main streets and inside civilian buildings near the entrances to al Asi Square, specifically an orphanage building.

Abdullah described seeing trucks that had been lined up to cut off the main street which he was taking, Saeed al Aas Street, from al Asi Square, adding that personnel from the security forces, pro-regime militias, and other personnel wearing military and civilian uniforms were deployed in this area. He also stated that he saw armed personnel on the rooftops of two government buildings there, namely the Ba'ath Party branch building and the Police Command building next door. Abdullah added, "**While we were near the Ba'ath Party building, the first row of demonstrators had reached the beginning of the square, at al Abisi Bridge, where the security forces opened fire at them, and therefore they began to retreat, going the opposite way.**"



Abdullah said that the area where he was had likely been targeted by snipers, adding that he saw a sniper on the roof of the Ba'ath Party building: **"Obviously there were several snipers stationed in several places, because the injuries were severe, and most of them were in the head or upper part of the body. While we were running away, about half a meter away from me, suddenly one of the demonstrators fell to the ground; I looked at him and saw his head had exploded."** Abdullah added, **"In addition to direct targeting by snipers, there were intimidation operations by firing large numbers of bullets into the sky."**



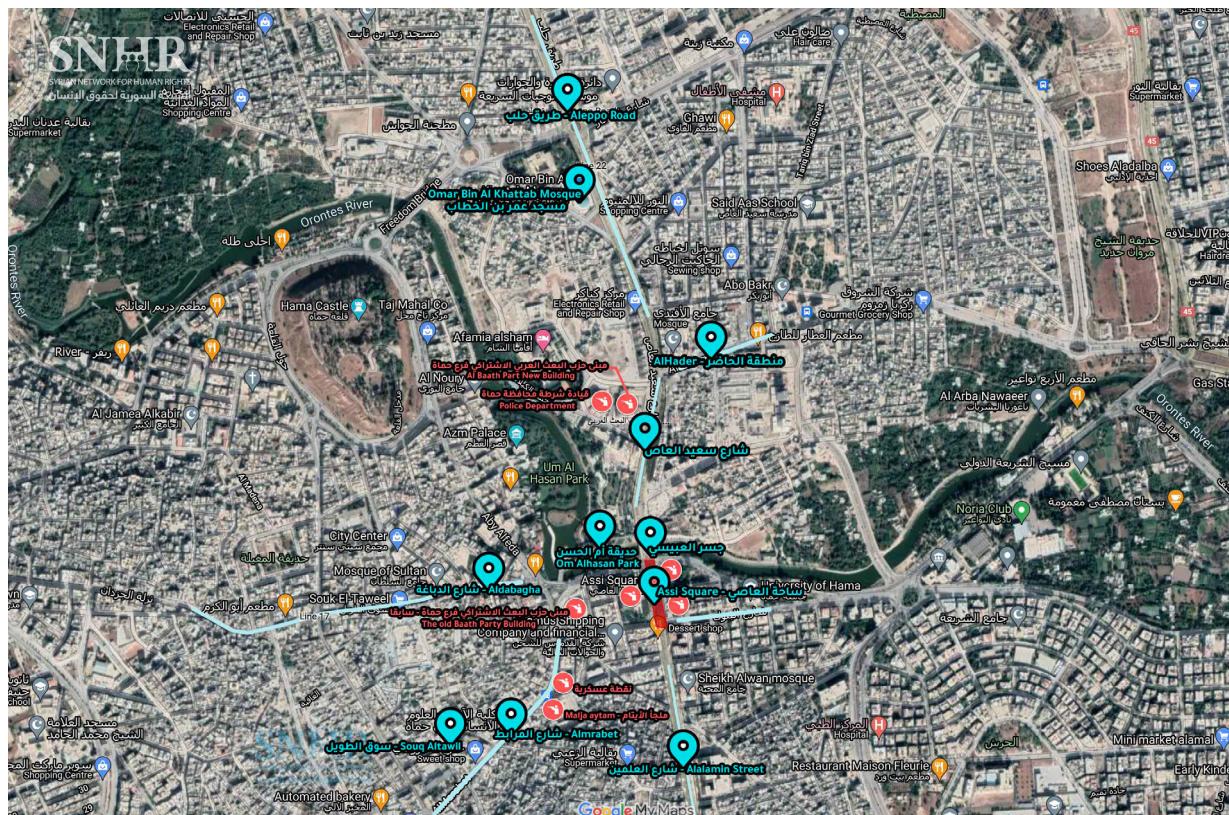
Sumaiyah Haddad, a staff member of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, told us what she went through on the day of the attack, **"With the start of the popular uprising in Hama governorate, I started working on documenting the martyrs with the help of activists from several areas in the city and the countryside, in parallel with working in the media field on Facebook pages. On the 'Children of Freedom Friday', and like the previous Fridays, I was monitoring the course of the demonstration, through some young men, who set out from three points in the city, to report simultaneously on one of the city's news pages. That day, as was usually the case on Fridays, the goal was to reach and gather in al Asi Square, with the absence of security personnel at the gates of mosques suggesting the possibility of this dream coming true. While I was talking to one of the young men nicknamed Abu Khaled, who was at that time on al Mu'alemin Street, suddenly I heard the sound of heavy gunfire, and the youths started chanting and shouting in loud voices, then the communication with him was cut off. I tried to reconnect with him and with the two other young men, one of whom was in al Hader area and the other in al Marabet, but to no avail. About half an hour or more passed before I could contact one of them, who answered me briefly: 'Tell the world that the security personnel have killed the peaceful demonstrators in Hama, and we can't transfer the injured to hospitals.' Abu Khaled told me later that the situation was worse than I imagined and that he was searching for our friend Muhsen, who was next to him, but to no avail, and it turned out to us later that he was martyred."**

**"On that day, due to the heavy gunfire, rescuing the injured was a risk to the lives of other protesters, so that vegetable vending carts were used to transport the martyrs and injured who filled the city's hospitals. Then, the funerals of the martyrs took place at the mosques in Hama city, and the foreign media began to circulate the news of a massacre in the city, with the number of its victims rising to nearly 300, and there were reports which we could not confirm about the presence of about 12 dead bodies in Um al Hasan Park, and [reports] that the security forces had disposed of them."**

Sumaiyah added, **"We were then faced with the biggest challenge of documenting these martyrs with our simple capabilities and our limited experience in this field, especially with a large number of missing persons. At that time, after nearly ten days of continuous work through communicating with activists and families, with the help of medical staff, we were able to document 81 martyrs, 65 of them with full data; the shooting that day was not only intended to disperse the demonstrators, as I learned from people who saw the bodies that dozens of the injuries were to the head and from the back, which shows that the source was the snipers stationed on high places. I still personally believe that the number of martyrs is greater than that; however, this is what we were able to document."**

Muhammad al Skaf, another staff member of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, was among the demonstrators on the day of the incident, specifically on al Marabet Street before the attack. He also told us about the presence of snipers: "**I saw the sniper on the rooftop of the building opposite the orphanage, and I saw his rifle; he was standing and moving and then aiming at his victim and shooting. I can estimate that the number of snipers in that area was two or three, because we faced difficulties in evacuating the injured due to the targeting by snipers. I could distinguish sniper bullets because they targeted people from long distances at the entrances of narrow alleys.**" Muhammad said that cars were unable to approach the orphanage area because they were targeted by snipers, and added "**The severely injured were the only ones for whom an attempt could be made to take them to hospitals, with people cooperating to get them out to the beginning of al Marabet Street, where a car stopped to take them to the hospital. I participated in the evacuation of three of the injured this way; we transferred them to al Hourani Hospital, which was the closest to al Marabet Street where I was. I stayed at the hospital door. Every time we thought that the flow of the injured had stopped, I was surprised by the same scene being repeated again, two carrying an injured person, one of them carrying him by his legs, and the other by the upper part of his body, with the hands dangling and blood dripping from his body; to this day, this scene still unfolds before my eyes.**"

We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights were able to identify the most prominent routes that the demonstrators took to reach al Asi Square. We also identified eight points where personnel affiliated with the Syrian regime were stationed; we believe that at least four of these points saw shooting at the demonstrators. The following interactive map illustrates these points:



 Most notable roads used by protesters

Military Point

Noor al Khateb, another staff member of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, who was also among the demonstrators, told us what she went through on the day of the attack, "**We used to go out in demonstrations on Fridays after the noon prayer, but on this Friday in particular, the number of demonstrators was very large, and the goal was to reach al Asi Square from the various neighborhoods through all the main streets leading to it. Every Friday, we used to go out to demonstrate, and then the security personnel would disperse the demonstrations by bullets, but on that day in particular, the security deployment was very intense.** I joined a group of my friends in the demonstration that came out from the al Serjawi Mosque, in al Jarajmah area, heading to al Asi Square through Nazlat al Jezdan; on the way, demonstrations from several other neighborhoods joined us, such as al Sheikh Anbar and al Wadi neighborhoods, with our number becoming about 50,000 demonstrators; when we arrived at March 8 Street, we were divided into two parts, one part went to al Dabbagh and from there to al Asi Square, and the larger part, which I and my friends were with, went towards al Marabet. According to what we were used to on previous Fridays, the security forces were shooting at the demonstrations upon their arrival at al Marabet, and so we would turn back, but the amount of human pressure on the Children of Freedom Friday made us believe that it was impossible for these masses to be able to reverse backwards if they were shot at. The demonstration continued to march towards al Marabet, and as soon as the first rows reached a point at the orphanage, which is consisted of a shelter and school for orphans a few meters away from al Asi Square, the shooting started."

Noor said that she was about 50 meters away from the orphanage when the shooting began targeting the group of demonstrators she was in, further mentioning that security forces were stationed at the orphanage building, and that when the demonstration passed near the orphanage, the forces there suddenly began shooting directly at the demonstrators as crowds of demonstrators arrived nearby, adding, "**At that time, I estimated that they had shot approximately two magazines of bullets at the demonstrators, and I saw demonstrators fall on the ground.**"

Noor added that these personnel returned to the orphanage, while the security forces stationed in al Asi Square began firing bullets at the demonstrators in al Marabet Square, with this gunfire continuing constantly for approximately 10-15 minutes, "**Here, a state of hysterical running began [among demonstrators], to the shops, the entrances to the buildings, alleyways, or any shelter away from bullets. My friends and I kept running until we arrived at Souq al Tawil, an old covered market, where we stayed until we learned that the shooting had stopped.**"

Noor said that this continuous direct gunfire caused severe injuries among the demonstrators, mostly to the head and chest, adding that it was not possible to evacuate the injured, because of the relentless shooting: "**After the security forces withdrew, we left the market, and the number of injured was very large, with transfers to nearby hospitals beginning. I went to al Hourani Hospital; when I entered through the back door, I saw large numbers of injured people filling the corridors, operating rooms, and ambulance rooms; I saw more than 25 martyrs,**" Noor added, "**As a result of these huge numbers of the injured, there was an urgent need for blood donation, and some medical supplies from the hospital ran out. So, with a group of friends, I campaigned to collect medical supplies from pharmacies, and then from the people any medical supplies, gauze, medicines, and others. We collected and then distributed them to the medical centers that received the injured.**

**"I heard from friends of mine that other hospitals, such as the Medical Center, al Badr Hospital, and al Ammouri Hospital, were also filled with injured and martyrs, as was the case with al Hourani Hospital."**

### III. Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Syrian regime forces have violated many provisions and principles of international human rights law, including extrajudicial killings, suppression of freedom of opinion, expression and demonstration, terrorizing and threatening opponents, issuing orders to the security services to kill and injure as many people as possible in Hama city, and not carrying out any investigations into the killing of this huge number of Syrian citizens.
- The Syrian regime has not only failed to protect the Syrian people from killing, rather it has been and remains the primary perpetrator of the killing, particularly since it is a very centralized regime, whose security or other services are unable to act without direct orders; the killings that the Syrian regime has practiced since March 2011 to date constitute crimes against humanity, particularly given their systematic and widespread nature, under Article 7 of the Rome Statute.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **The UN Security Council:**

- The Syrian issue must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations must be held accountable.
- Impose urgent sanctions on all those involved in massive violations of human rights.

##### **The international community:**

- Resort to Chapter VII and implement the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly.
- Immediately intervene to protect civilians in Syria from crimes against humanity and take all necessary measures for that.

##### **Human Rights Council:**

- Condemn the widespread killings carried out by the Syrian regime.

##### **The League of Arab States:**

- Work seriously to protect the Syrian people and state from the oppression and terror of the Syrian regime.

##### **The Syrian regime:**

- Stop killing Syrian citizens.
- Submit resignations and leave power after being involved in multiple crimes against humanity against the Syrian people.

### Thanks and Condolences

Our sincere thanks and condolences to all the local people and activists whose contributions have greatly and effectively contributed to and enriched this report.



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