

Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 723 Civilians in Syria in the First Half of 2021

SNHR Documented the Deaths of 95 Civilians in June 2021, Including 22 children, Eight Women and 11 Individuals Killed by Torture

Thursday 1 JULY 2021

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.

Content

I. Background and Methodology	2
II. Summary of the Most Notable Killings in June	4
III. Death Toll of Civilian Victims	6
IV. Death Toll of Victims Who Died Due to Torture, and Victims Amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel	11
V. Record of Most Notable Massacres	17
VI. The Syrian Regime Bears Primary Responsibility for the Deaths of Syrian Citizens Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic	19
VII. The Most Notable Work Carried Out by SNHR on the Extrajudicial Killing Issue	20
VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations	21

I. Background and Methodology:

The documentation process to register victims killed in Syria is one of the most important roles performed by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) since March 2011. This is all the more crucial since murder is the most prevalent of all the violations perpetrated, and the one which most profoundly affects the Syrian people, with countless families suffering incalculable and irreparable trauma through the loss of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, etc.

These violations have become so widespread primarily through Syrian regime forces' and affiliated militias' systematic killing of civilians, with these forces being almost the sole perpetrators of killings from the aforementioned date up to the beginning of 2012. The regime began by using tanks and artillery, then proceeded to also use warplanes and helicopter gunships which have deployed barrel bombs, in addition to Scud missiles and chemical weapons.

The entry of several other parties into the Syrian conflict has further increased the importance and complexity of documenting the victims killed in Syria.

This report records the death toll of victims whose deaths were documented by SNHR as taking place at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in June and in the first half of 2021, particularly focusing on those victims killed under torture, and victims amongst media, medical and Civil Defense personnel, paying particular attention to those massacres committed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces which the SNHR was able to document in this period.

We should note that in this context we use the term "massacre" to refer to any attack that resulted in the deaths of five or more peaceful individuals in the same incident.

The report also includes an outline of the most notable incidents during this period. Finally, we maintain the full details of every incident on the SNHR database.

The report catalogues the death toll of victims according to the perpetrator parties in the Syrian conflict. Accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks.

In addition, in cases where we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for a particular killing to one of two possible parties because of the area's proximity to the lines of engagement, the use of similar weapons, or other reasons, the incident is categorized among 'other parties' until we have sufficient evidence to conclusively assign responsibility for the violation to one of the two parties.

The parties to the conflict who this report documents as committing extrajudicial killings are:

A. The main parties:

- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)¹
- Russian forces

¹ We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria.

- ISIS
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham²
- The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army
- Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party)
- US-led Coalition forces

B. Other parties

Through use of SNHR's extensive database, we can catalogue the victims according to the governorate where they were killed, and also by the governorate from which they originally came. This report catalogues the death toll of victims according to the governorate in which they were killed, rather than by the governorate they originally came from.

In this report, we record only the death toll of civilians, whose deaths we were able to document during the last month, as well as in the first half of 2021. SNHR does not document the deaths of fighters and militants killed during the conflict, while some of the victims documented may have been killed months or even years ago, as in some cases of death due to torture; in these cases, where the deaths have only recently been confirmed, we include two dates, the date when we were able to document the victim's death, and the date on which we think the death occurred.

The methodology adopted by the Syrian Network for Human Rights in documenting the victims can be seen at this link³.

This report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on information from our extensive network of various sources that has been built up over the course of our work since 2011. Our team follows up on incidents and related reports in a variety of ways in the effort to verify information and collect as much relevant evidence and data as possible. In some cases, researchers are able to visit the incident location immediately. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks, and given the frequency of daily violation incidents. SNHR's customary policy in such cases is to rely on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, as we try to reach them promptly, and secondarily on the accounts of those who witnessed or photographed the violation in question, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the Internet and media outlets; third, by talking with medical personnel who treated the individuals injured in these incidents, examined the deceased victims' bodies, and identified the cause of death. The SNHR also provides [a special form](#) that can be completed by victims' relatives with victims' names and personal information so that the Victims Documentation Department can follow up on the information provided, verify its accuracy and then include it in the database.

² The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

³ "Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology", Syrian Network for Human Rights. <http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf>

The death toll of victims detailed on SNHR's database includes extrajudicial killings by the controlling forces which occurred as a violation of either international human rights law or international humanitarian law or both, but does not include cases of natural deaths or those which occurred because of disputes between members of society or other such issues.

Our investigations confirm that all of the attacks included in this report that were carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria targeted civilian areas where we documented no military presence or armories before or during the attacks, and in which the perpetrators failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks as required by international humanitarian law.

Also, there is great difficulty in determining which party was responsible for planting landmines, due to the multiplicity of forces controlling the areas in which these explosions occurred, and therefore we do not attribute the vast majority of deaths caused by landmines to a specific party. None of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria have revealed maps of the places where they planted landmines. We have recorded continuing deaths due to landmines despite repeated appeals by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and urgent requests for the essential intervention of international teams to help uncover the locations where landmines are deployed and to put pressure on the controlling forces in Syria to determine their locations of deployment in order to reduce the number of casualties among civilians resulting from them.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Summary of the Most Notable Killings in June:

The continuation of the killings in various regions and in various forms confirms that Syria is one of the worst, if not the worst, country in the world for deaths among citizens due to extrajudicial killings, including killings under torture.

The following are the most notable incidents and types of killing that occurred against Syrian citizens in June:

- On Tuesday, June 1, 2021, [at least three civilians were killed](#) while others were injured when Syrian Democratic Forces opened fire at protesters participating in a peaceful anti-SDF protest in Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

- On Saturday, June 5, 2021, [Faisal Awad Allouh, the mayor of Ataman village](#) in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was shot dead, by unidentified gunmen in the village, which is controlled by Syrian regime forces.

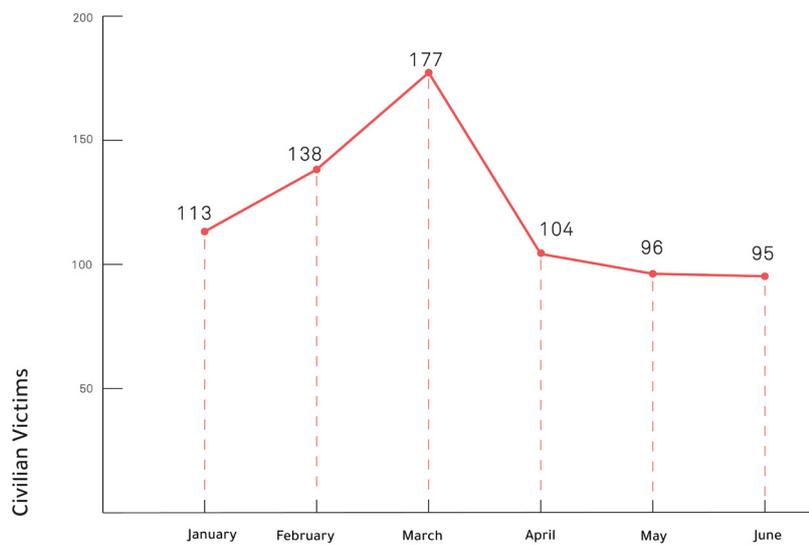
- In June, remote/ suicide (forced suicide) bombings continued in Syria, resulting in civilian casualties, with SNHR documenting [the deaths of 10 civilians, including six children](#); in one such case, Muhammad Ali al Ali, from Deir Hafer city in east of Aleppo governorate, was killed when a suicide/ forced suicide bomber blew himself up with an explosive belt in the middle of al Ra'ie town's market in the northeastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which also injured seven civilians in addition causing severe material damage to a number of shops.
- On Tuesday, June 8, 2021, [Amr Belal Sheghri, a child from Ebleen village](#) in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was killed, while two other children were injured when Russian artillery forces used a shell to target a house in southwest of the village.
- On Saturday, June 12, 2021, [Safaa Abboud, a 16-year-old female child, was killed](#), along with the unborn baby of Samaher Muhammad Barakat, who was injured as were five other civilians, when missiles fired by fixed-wing warplanes which we believe were Russian hit houses in the outskirts of Mentef village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.
- On Thursday, June 17, 2021, [two children, Muhammad and Faten Ra'ed Suleiman](#), brothers aged four and three respectively, from al Hola area in the suburbs of Homs governorate, died, while their parents sustained burns in a fire that broke out in their tent in Sa'ed IDP Camp in Kafrlousin area in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate due to the misuse of cooking appliances.
- On Saturday, June 19, 2021, [Hussein al Su'oud was killed when a landmine of unknown source exploded near his car](#) on the road linking Aqareb al Safiya and Abu Hanaya villages in eastern suburbs of Hama governorate. The area is under the control of Syrian regime forces.
- On Monday, June 21, 2021, policeman [Walid Muhammad al Asaad was killed](#) when a police station affiliated with the Salvation Government in west of Ihsem town in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate was attacked with shells whose source hasn't been identified. The primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack are Syrian regime forces and Russian forces, with the attack emanating from an area controlled by them.
- Rawad Ahmad al Hammadin, a 10-year-old child, [was killed along with his older brother](#), Abdullah, and another adult civilian named as Muhammad Nouri al Musa, when Syrian regime artillery forces fired shells at the cemetery in Iffes village in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate while a woman's funeral was taking place there. It should be noted that the shelling also beheaded the dead woman whose funeral was taking place.

III. Death Toll of Civilian Victims:

1. In the first half of 2021:

SNHR documented the deaths of 723 civilians, including 145 children and 79 women (adult female), killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in 2021.

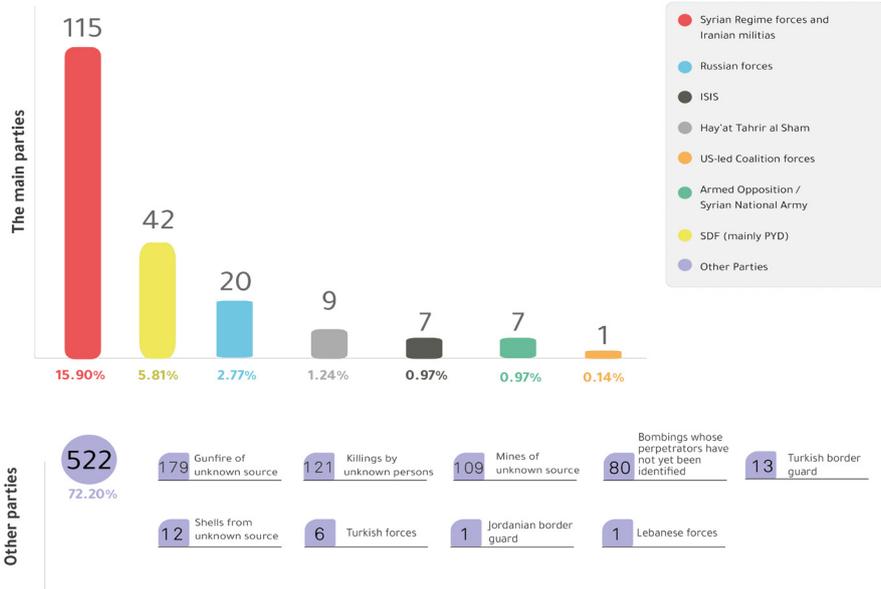
The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria in the first half of 2021 was distributed as follows:



We notice a significant decrease in the number of deaths in the last two months compared to the previous two months of this year, with most of the victims who were documented killed in the last two months being killed at the hands of other parties.

The death toll we documented in the first half of 2021 was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

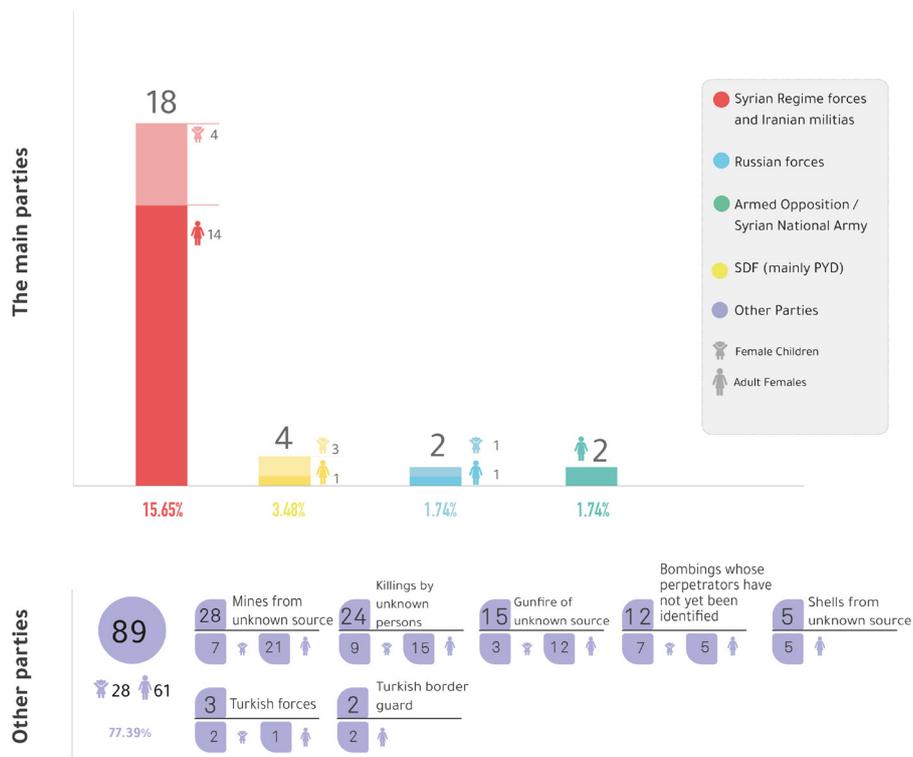
723 civilians were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in the first half of 2021



145 children were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in the first half of 2021



115 females were killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in the first half of 2021



A. The main parties:

- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)/ Russian forces:

We documented the deaths of 115 civilians at the hands of Syrian regime forces, including 22 children and 14 women (adult female).

- Russian forces:

We documented the deaths of 20 civilians as a result of bombardment by forces which we believe to be Russian, including five children and one woman.

- ISIS:

We documented the deaths of seven civilians at the hands of ISIS.

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

We documented the deaths of nine civilians at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, including four children.

- The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:

We documented the deaths of seven civilians at the hands of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army, including two women.

- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):

We documented the deaths of 42 civilians, including seven children and one woman, at the hands of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

- US-led Coalition forces:

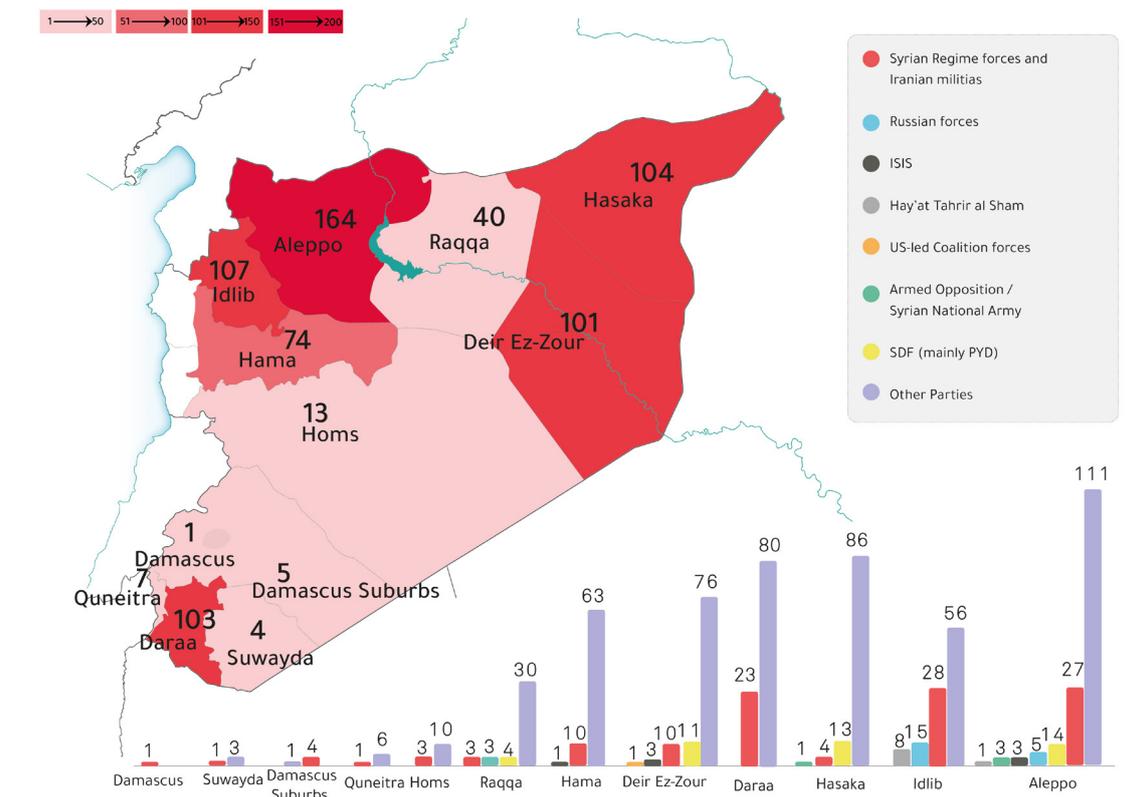
We documented the death of one civilian at the hands of US-led Coalition forces.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 522 civilians, including 107 children and 61 women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Gunfire of unknown source: 179 civilians, including 10 children and 12 women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 80 civilians, including 32 children and five women.
- Killings by unknown persons: 121 civilians, including 18 children and 15 women.
- Landmines of unknown source: 109 civilians, including 39 children and 21 women.
- Shells from unknown source: 12 civilians, including one child and five women.
- Turkish border guard: 13 civilians, including three children and two women.
- Lebanese forces: One civilian.
- Jordanian border guard: One civilian.
- Turkish forces: Six civilians, including four children and one woman.

The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces documented in the first half of 2021 was distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:

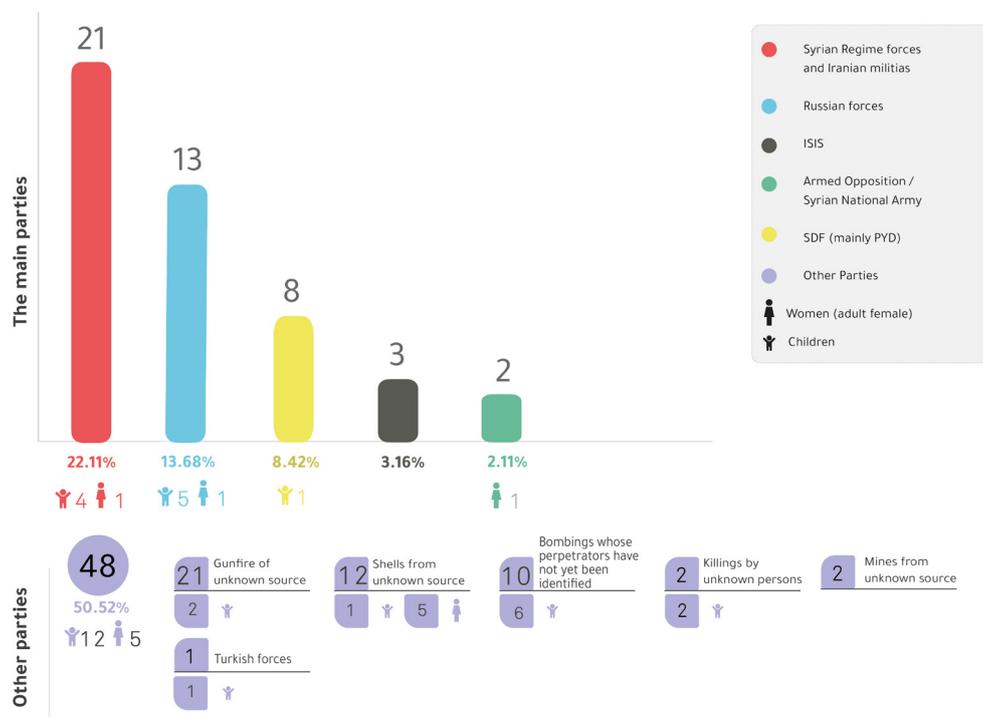


Aleppo governorate saw the largest death toll compared to other Syrian governorates, accounting for 23% of the total death toll since the beginning of 2021, with most of the victims in Aleppo governorate killed at the hands of other parties. Idlib governorate came second, followed by Hasaka and Daraa with approximately 14% for both, then Deir Ez-Zour with 13%.

2. In June 2021:

In June, 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of 95 civilians, including 22 children and eight women (adult female), killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll we documented in June 2021 was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:



A. The main parties:

- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)/ Russian forces:

We documented the deaths of 21 civilians at the hands of Syrian regime forces/ Russian forces, including four children and one woman.

- Russian forces:

We documented the deaths of 13 civilians at the hands of Russian forces, including five children and one woman.

- ISIS:

We documented the deaths of three civilians at the hands of ISIS.

- The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:

We documented the deaths of two civilians at the hands of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army, including one woman.

- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):

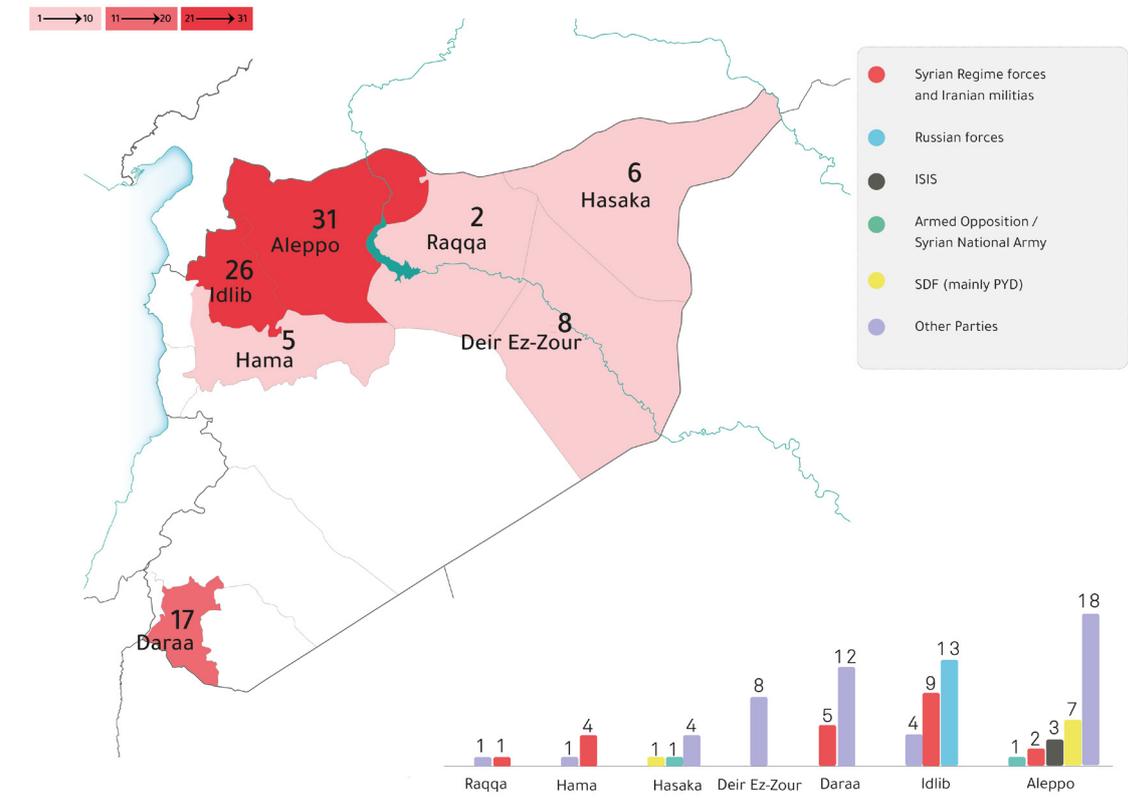
We documented the deaths of eight civilians, including one child, at the hands of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 48 civilians, including 12 children and five women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown source: Two civilians.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 21 civilians, including two children.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 10 civilians, including six children.
- Killings by unknown persons: Two children.
- Shells from unknown source: 12 civilians, including one child and five women.
- Turkish forces: One child.

The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces documented in June 2021 was distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



Aleppo governorate saw the largest death toll compared to other Syrian governorates, accounting for 32%, with most of the victims in Aleppo governorate killed at the hands of other parties, followed by Idlib governorate with 27%, with most of the victims in Idlib governorate killed at the hands of Syrian regime forces/Russian forces.

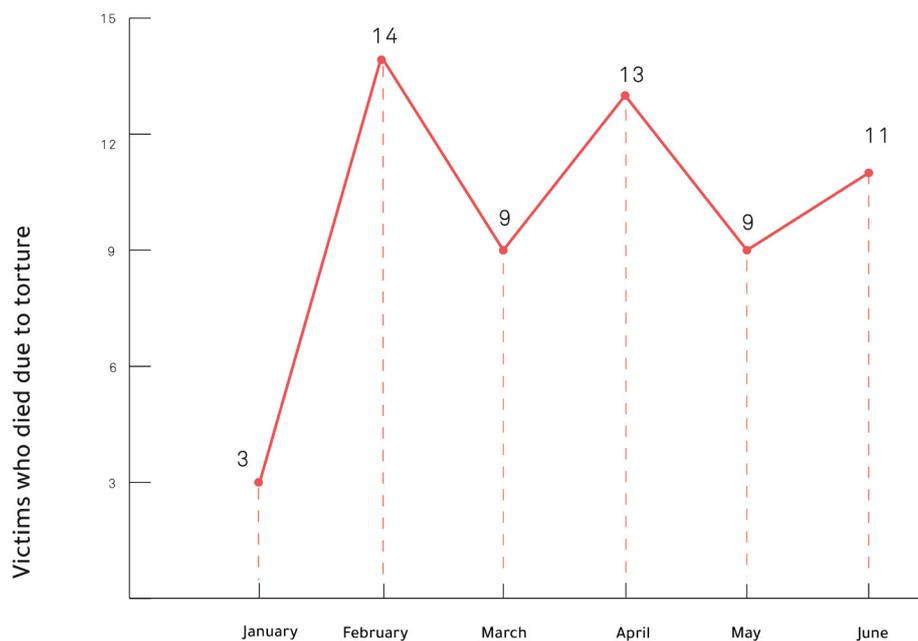
IV. Death Toll of Victims Who Died Due to Torture, and Victims Amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel:

A. Death toll of victims who died due to torture

1. In the first half of 2021:

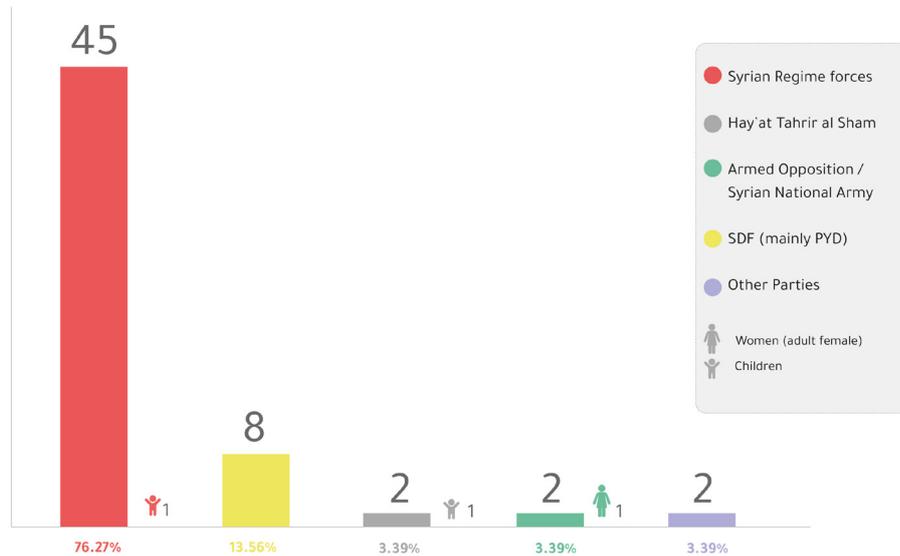
SNHR documented the deaths of 59 individuals due to torture, including two children and one woman, in the first half of 2021 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll of victims whom SNHR documented their death due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria since the beginning of 2021 was distributed as follows:



The previous chart shows that the largest death toll among torture victims recorded in this period was documented in February, accounting for 24% of all torture victims documented killed in the first half of 2021, with the percentage of victims whose deaths by torture we documented as taking place in the Syrian regime's detention centers since the beginning of the year accounting for approximately 76% of the total death toll of torture victims.

The death toll of victims whom SNHR documented their death due to torture in the first half of 2021 was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:



A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 45, including one child.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Two, including one child.
- **The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:** Two, including one woman.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Eight.

B. Other parties: Two.

The most notable deaths due to torture documented in the first half of 2021 are:

Muhammad Hasan al Helou, who was a state railway sector employee from Hayyan town in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, aged 53, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2015 in front of al Razi Hospital in Aleppo city. Almost since that time, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, SNHR received information indicating his death in custody. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he most probably died due to torture in a regime detention center. We can also confirm that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



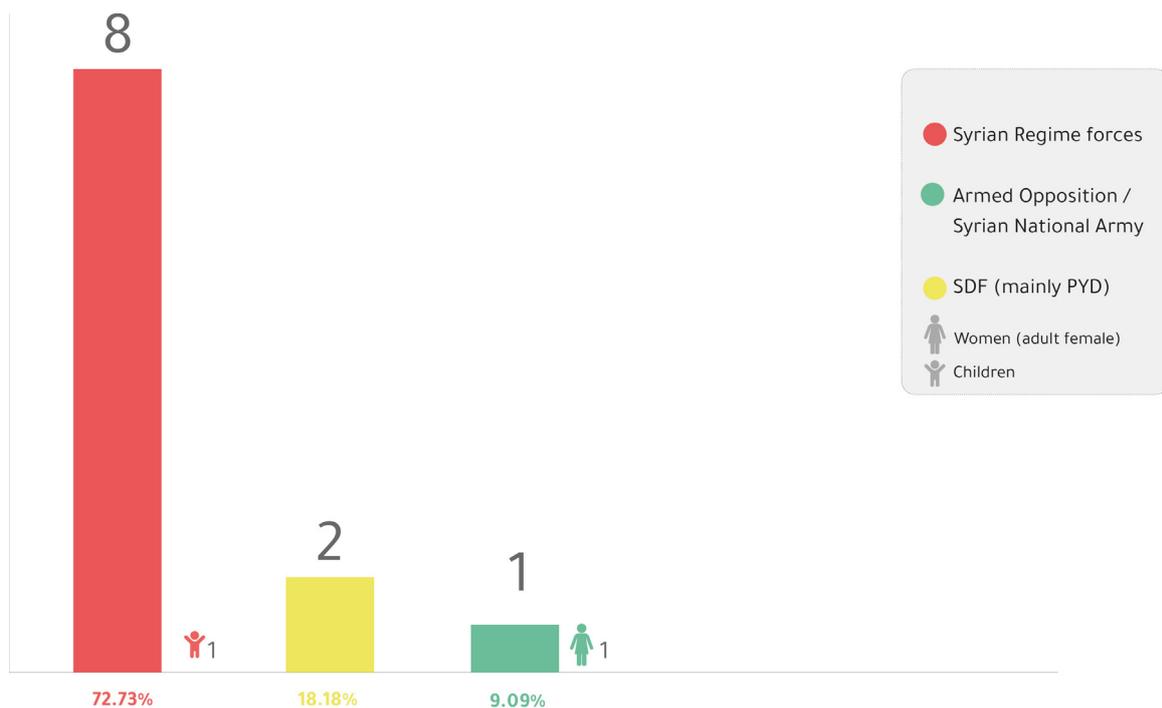
Ghiath Abboud Saud al Faadel, from Tal al Shayer village, which is administratively a part of al Shaddadi city in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, born in 2000, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in May 2019. Almost since that time, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the SDF preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or knowing his fate. On Wednesday, May 12, 2021, his family was informed by SDF personnel that Ghiath had died in the SDF's Hasaka Central Prison in Hasaka city, with his body returned to them. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he most probably died due to torture in Hasaka Central Prison.



Ghiath Abboud Saud al Faadel

2. In June 2021:

SNHR documented in June 2021 the deaths of 11 victims due to torture at the of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, including one child and one woman, distributed as follows:



Syrian regime forces: Eight, including one child.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army: One woman.

Syrian Democratic Forces: Two.

The most notable cases are:

Al Muntaser Billah Mahmoud Faraj al Ahmad al Faraj, was a university student at Aleppo University's Faculty of Engineering at the time of his arrest. Al Muntaser, from al Safsaf village, which is administratively a part of al Tabaqa area in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in Aleppo city in 2015. Almost since that time, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Tuesday, June 1, 2021, his family received information indicating that he had died in detention. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he most probably died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. We confirm that Syrian regime forces did not hand over his body to his family.



Two brothers, [Mahmoud and Omar Ali Mahmoud al Kurdi](#), from Busra al Sham city in east of Daraa governorate, were arrested along with their father by Syrian regime forces in the city in 2012 when the brothers were aged 19 and 17 respectively. Almost since that time, they have been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying their detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting them. On Thursday, June 17, 2021, their family received information indicating that they had died in detention. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that they were in good health at the time of their arrest, indicating that they most probably died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. We confirm that Syrian regime forces did not hand over their bodies to their family.

B. Death toll of medical personnel**1. In the first half of 2021:**

In the first half of 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of four medical personnel, including two women, who were killed at the hands of other parties, one by gunfire of unknown source, and three by shells from an unknown source.

Atiyah Ali al Fajri, a 39-year-old pharmacist from Abu Hardoub village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was shot dead on March 27, 2021, by unidentified gunmen at his pharmacy in Suwaidan Jazira village in the eastern suburbs of the governorate, which is controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces.

2. In June 2021:

In June 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of three medical personnel, including two women, who were killed at the hands of other parties.

Dr. Amin Qushou, a 55-years-old anesthesiologist who worked in Deirsim Hospital in Afrin city, from Khalnira village in Afrin suburbs, died on Saturday, June 12, 2021, when unknown parties used a missile launcher to fire a number of missiles targeting the vicinity of al Shefaa Hospital, located in Villas Street in the center of Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate; the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack are either Syrian regime forces or Syrian Democratic Forces, with the attack emanating from an area controlled by them in the Kashta'ar area.

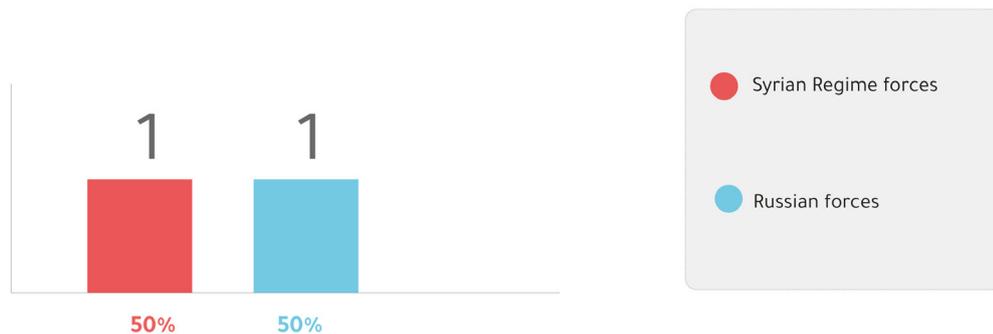
C. Death toll of media workers

SNHR didn't document any deaths among media workers in the first half of 2021.

D. Death toll of Civil Defense personnel

1. In the first half of 2021:

SNHR documented in the first half of 2021 the deaths of at least two Civil Defense personnel, at the of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed as follows:



Syrian regime forces/ Russian forces: One.

Russian forces: One.

Ahmad al Waki, a Civil Defense member, stationed at the Tarhin Center, who originally came from al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of the Aleppo governorate, was killed on Friday, March 5, 2021, while he was working to extinguish a fire caused by four long-range Tochka missiles loaded with cluster munitions, which are believed to have been fired from the Russian Hmeimim military airbase, targeting the fuel-refining burners in Tarhin village near al Bab city, also in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in massive fires in the burners; during the firefighting operation by the Syrian Civil Defense, one of the fuel tanks exploded, resulting in Ahmad's death, with the blaze also burning heavy 'packer-excavator' type machinery, and gutting a fire engine, putting it out of service. The area was under the control of the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident. The Syrian Civil Defense published a tribute to Ahmad al Waki on its ['Twitter' account](#).



2. In June 2021:

SNHR documented the death of one Civil Defense worker in June 2021 at the hands of Syrian regime forces/ Russian forces.

Dahham Abdul Ghani al Hussein, a Civil Defense worker, from Deqmaq village in west of Hama governorate, was killed on Saturday, June 19, 2021, when the Civil Defense center in Qastoun village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate was subjected to an attack by several shells whose source hasn't been identified as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being Syrian regime forces or Russian forces, with the shelling emanating from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to identify the party responsible for the shelling. The shelling also injured three other Civil Defense workers, in addition to inflicting huge destruction on the center's structure and causing moderate material damage to two of the vehicles belonging to the Civil Defense (one fire truck and one service car). As a result, the center has been put out of service. The Syrian Civil Defense published [a tribute](#) to Dahham al Hussein on its 'Twitter' account.



V. Record of Most Notable Massacres:

1. In the first half of 2021:

SNHR documented at least 10 massacres in the first half of 2021, distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:



A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Two.
- **Russian forces:** One.

B. Other parties:

We documented seven massacres at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Three.
- Landmines of unknown source: Two.
- Killings by unknown persons: One.
- Shells from unknown source: One.

The two massacres perpetrated by Syrian regime forces in the first half of 2021 were in areas under the joint control of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham

According to the SNHR's Victim Documentation team, the massacres documented in the first half of 2021 resulted in the deaths of 85 civilians, including 20 children and 31 women (adult female). This means that 60 percent of all the victims were women and children, a very high proportion, and a clear indication that civilian residents were specifically targeted in most of these massacres.

The most notable massacres documented in the first half of 2021 are:

On Saturday, January 31, 2021, [a car bomb](#) of unknown [source exploded](#) in a residential neighborhood near Dawwar al Arman neighborhood, known as al Markez al Thaqafi Street, in [Izaz city](#) in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in [the deaths of six civilians](#), including two female children and a woman. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. Izaz city was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, April 8, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces, stationed in [Shellef Castle](#) in the northern suburbs of Latakia, fired an MD-type anti-tank guided missile, [targeting a car](#) in which a number of civilians were traveling whilst it was at the intersection of al Najeyya village in the western suburbs of Idlib, resulting in the deaths of seven civilians, including three children (two females and one male) and two women. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

B. In June 2021:

SNHR documented two massacres in June 2021, distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Russian forces:** One.

B. Other parties: One

- Shells from unknown source: One.

The two massacres documented in June 2021 resulted in the deaths of 19 civilians, including three children and six women.

On Thursday, June 10, 2021, Russian artillery forces, stationed in areas controlled by Syrian regime forces, working in coordination with a Russian reconnaissance [aircraft](#), fired several [shells targeting civilian](#) homes in [the center of Ebleen village](#) in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate; while other local residents were evacuating the injured, Syrian regime artillery forces shelled the same location, again in tandem with the reconnaissance aircraft, resulting in [the deaths of 12 individuals](#), including [seven civilians, two of them children](#) and one a woman, as well as [five fighters](#), including [the military spokesman](#) for Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, Abu Khaled al Shami, in addition to injuring about [11 people](#). Ebleen village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, June 12, 2021, at around 19:00, unknown parties used a [missile launcher](#) to fire a number of missiles targeting the vicinity of [al Shefaa Hospital](#), located in Villas Street in the center [of Afrin city](#) in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate; the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack are either Syrian regime forces or Syrian Democratic Forces, with [the attack emanating](#) from an area controlled by them in the Kashta'ar area. While local people rushed to rescue survivors and evacuate the injured, the forces responsible for the first [attack](#) fired two more missiles. [The attacks resulted in the deaths of 14 individuals, 12 of them civilians](#), including one child and five women. Among the victims were three Civil Defense personnel, including two women. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. [Afrin city](#) was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

VI. The Syrian Regime Bears Primary Responsibility for the Deaths of Syrian Citizens Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

This report does not include all deaths, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as we mainly document extrajudicial killings, but there is no doubt that the negligence shown by the Syrian regime and its disastrous mismanagement of the Syrian state in recent years are the primary factors behind the massive numbers of deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic and other disease outbreaks and illnesses, as seen in the regime's neglect of public healthcare and indifference towards citizens' wellbeing, with the state's only genuine protection reserved for the ruling family, its entourage and the regime elite. It should always be remembered that the Syrian regime and its Russian ally have repeatedly been documented as having targeted, bombed and destroyed most medical facilities in Syria, and killed hundreds of medical personnel, according to the SNHR's database, with dozens of these lifesaving medics still classified as having been forcibly disappeared at the regime's hands. The Syrian regime's Ministry of Health [has announced](#) the deaths of 1,873 cases in Syria due to the COVID-19 as of June 29, 2021; while this is an alarmingly high number, we believe that this statistic is inaccurate and that the number of deaths is actually far higher due to the regime's weak medical capabilities, as there is no medical examination to confirm or deny the patient's infection with COVID-19, confirming the occurrence of a large number of deaths due to COVID-19 without the cause being disclosed. Concern over a probable regime cover-up of the real COVID-19 death toll is exacerbated by the absence of any transparency in the various government ministries, and in view of the security services' control over any data issued by these ministries, as is usually the case with totalitarian regimes.

The regime's failure to release arbitrarily detained individuals, particularly the elderly and individuals detained with no charges, most notably [around 3,329 medical personnel](#), whose cases we discussed in a special detailed report, provides further clear evidence of the Syrian regime's primary responsibility for the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria. The regime, which controls and manages state institutions, has completely failed to provide even the most rudimentary protection to Syrian civilians, but has instead exploited the state institutions to protect and benefit the ruling family in order to ensure their continued rule, even if 13 million Syrian citizens are displaced from their homes to achieve this, with most of those displaced unable to return home since their homes have been ransacked and subjected to widespread looting and destruction by regime forces and affiliated militias.

VII. The Most Notable Work Carried Out by SNHR on the Extrajudicial Killing Issue:

Since 2011, the SNHR has created complex electronic programs to archive and categorize the victims' data, which the team collects and verifies, enabling us to catalogue the victims according to their gender, age, the date and place of death, method of killing used, type of weapon used, and perpetrator party, and to make comparisons between these parties. We can also distribute the death toll according to the governorate in which the incident of death occurred, and according to the governorate from which the victim originated, in order to show the extent of the loss suffered by the people of that governorate, and enables us to accurately ascertain the highest rates of violence documented in the case of each violation. SNHR's Victim Documentation Department team constantly updates its comprehensive database, with all the data added to the SNHR's database being retained securely, and several backup copies being stored in different locations.

Since 2011, we have also been exceptionally concerned about incidents involving the killing of children and women; there is hardly a statistic recorded on our database that does not include either, due to the vulnerability of these groups in the community, and because they give an indication of the rate of targeting of civilians. We later added other civilian groups which have played a key role in the popular uprising and later in the armed conflict, such as media, medical, relief and Civil Defense personnel.

For nearly ten years, we have issued [daily death](#) tolls of victims, as well as [daily news](#) reports on killing incidents. We also issue a [monthly report](#) detailing the death toll of victims, whose deaths were documented in Syria during the previous month, amongst civilians, as well as of those who died [due to torture](#), in addition to issuing a biannual report and annual report, as well as dozens of other special reports [documenting the total death toll](#) or the death toll at the hands of one of the parties to the conflict in particular, in addition to a [monthly report](#) and special and periodic reports documenting the [massacres](#) committed on Syrian soil.

SNHR also periodically sends a special form to the United Nations [Special Rapporteur](#) on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, submitting cases of killings on which we were able to document all of the available data, having obtained the consent of each victim's family members before submitting them.

It should be noted that the United Nations has relied on the Syrian Network for Human Rights for all the statistics it has used in its analysis of victims in the conflict, given SNHR's prominent role as one of the most credible sources. SNHR has also partnered with numerous United Nations bodies, in addition to governments of states, to provide them with statistics from our databases, in order to serve the path of justice, and ultimately to ensure the accountability and prosecution of criminals. SNHR is also used as a trustworthy source by a large number of Arab and international news agencies and many international human rights organizations.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Conclusions:

- The evidence we collected indicates that some of the attacks documented in this report were deliberately directed against civilians and civilian objects. These attacks along with indiscriminate bombardment have resulted in the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- A large proportion of Syrians were killed as a result of landmines, and none of the perpetrator forces in the Syrian conflict have revealed maps of the locations where landmines were planted. This indicates total indifference to the lives of civilians, and children in particular.
- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139 and resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, as well as resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- ISIS has violated international humanitarian law, causing the deaths of civilians.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the alliance of US-led coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, with the crimes of indiscriminate killing amounting to war crimes.
- The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army has violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated international humanitarian law, causing the deaths of civilians.
- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal mindset intent on deliberately inflicting the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the four Geneva Convention (articles 27, 31, 32).
- Remote or suicide bombings are inaccurate and unguided explosions that clearly violate the principle of distinction between civilian and military objectives, and the principles of precautions and proportionality in attacks. Civilian and military commanders bear criminal responsibility according to the principle of command responsibility. The controlling forces also bear the responsibility to protect civilians in the areas under their control, to open investigations into the bombing incidents and to reveal their findings to the public.
- The controlling forces bear the responsibility to determine the identity of the perpetrators of the killings of all the civilians whose bodies have been found, and to open investigations into all the incidents included in the report.

Recommendations:**UN Security Council**

The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly states that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”

The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using the veto, as it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states' veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.

The Security Council should ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians' lives and to save the Syrian people's heritage and historical artefacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.

The Security Council should request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons' camps, and follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

There will be no stability in Syria without first achieving a political transition towards democracy and human rights in the country within a specific timetable, and this will only be achieved through the imposition of various pressures, mainly on the Syrian regime and its allies, because it will not give up power voluntarily.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing, as well as through increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. By failing to do so, the Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

- Work to launch projects to create maps revealing the locations of landmines and cluster munitions in all Syrian governorates. This would facilitate the process of clearing them and educating the population about their locations.
- Pressure the Syrian regime and its allies to compensate the displaced victims, to repair homes and vital facilities, support the political transition process, and put pressure on all the parties obliging them to implement the political transition within a period of time not exceeding six months, so that millions of displaced people can have a safe and stable return to their homes.

OHCHR

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.
- Work on preparing a special report on the use of landmines in Syria and the risks they pose to civilians, and identify the most prominent locations where landmines were planted.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.

The United Nations Special Envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- Revive the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the regime planted landmines, especially in civilian areas or near residential communities.

The Russian regime

- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in the Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and allow the unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.
- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 84,000 people disappeared by the Syrian regime.

The Coalition (US-led coalition and Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the US-led coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Rather than attempting denial, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those affected.
- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF is engaged in violating the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.
- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF forces, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and affected.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the SDF planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army

- Ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

Humanitarian organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.
- Exert efforts in landmine clearance operations in parallel with relief operations whenever the opportunity arises.

Acknowledgment

We thank all family members, relatives and friends of the victims, along with the eyewitnesses and local activists, whose contributions have enriched this report.



www.snhr.org - info@sn4hr.org