

Five Media Workers Killed and Three Injured in Syria, Toll of March 2018

Seven Media Workers Have
been Killed at the hands of
Syrian Regime Forces in 2018,
all of them in Eastern Ghouta



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Thursday, April 5, 2018

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.



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I. Introduction and Methodology

Parties to the conflict have oppressed journalists and citizen journalists to varying extents, committing crimes qualifying as war crimes against them. The Syrian regime, however, is the party who has perpetrated most of these crimes since March 2011, where the Syrian regime has been responsible for up to 83% as it waged a systematic war on media workers, committing hundreds of violations against journalists and citizen journalists, including killing, arrest, and torture in an attempt to conceal the human rights violations that the Syrian people are being subjected to and hide the crimes against Syrian citizens.

On the other hand, ISIS, factions from the armed opposition and Self-Management forces resorted to suppressing views as a policy in their areas of control as seen by the wide arrests they made.

In light of all of that, Syria has fallen to the 177th place (out of 180 countries) according to the Reports Without Borders' [Press Freedom Index for 2017](#), who described Syria as "the world's deadliest country for journalists."

A journalist is a civilian individual according to the international humanitarian law regardless of their nationality. Any attack deliberately directed against a journalist is considered a war crime. However, when a media worker gets close to action-heavy zones, they are responsible for their own actions where targeting them in such case would be seen as collateral damage. Also, they would lose the right to protection if they were involved in hostilities.



The international humanitarian law states that journalists should be protected, as Article 79 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 says that civilian journalists who are engaged in missions in areas of armed conflict should be respected, considered as civilians, and protected from all forms of deliberate attacks, provided that they take to action adversely affecting their status as civilians. Additionally, Rule 34 of the international humanitarian law's customary rules states that:” **Civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities.”**

In addition, Security Council adopted [Resolution 2222](#) on May 27, 2015, which condemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict,

Methodology

This report monitors the most notable violations against media workers (journalists and citizen journalists) in March 2018 by the parties to the conflict.

SNHR defines a citizen journalist as anyone who plays a significant role in reporting and publishing news. He is not necessarily impartial as a journalist should be. In case a citizen journalist bore arms and was directly engaged in hostilities, he would be no longer deemed a citizen journalist whereas it is possible that he would be referred to as a citizen journalist again, provided he retires completely from military action.

This report draws upon, firstly, on the daily, ongoing documentation and monitoring efforts by SNHR team, and, secondly, on accounts from survivors, eyewitnesses, and local media workers that we've talked to via phone or social media. We have also analyzed a large number of the videos and pictures that were posted online or we received from local activists via e-mail, Skype, and social media. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report in a secret online database, as well as backup copies on hard drives. We always make sure to store this data with its respective source. Nonetheless, we can't claim that we have documented all cases, in light of the ban and pursuit by Syrian regime forces and some of the other armed groups.

Please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [documenting victims](#).



This report contains eight accounts that we've collected through speaking directly to eyewitnesses, and not are cited from any open sources. We have explained the purpose of these interviews for the eyewitnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided without offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR tried to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible, and gave insurances to conceal the identity of any witness who preferred to use an alias.

The report might include incidents that we believe do not constitute violations of the international humanitarian law. We include it, however, to preserve the truth historically and store it as a national record, but we don't describe it as having qualified as crimes.

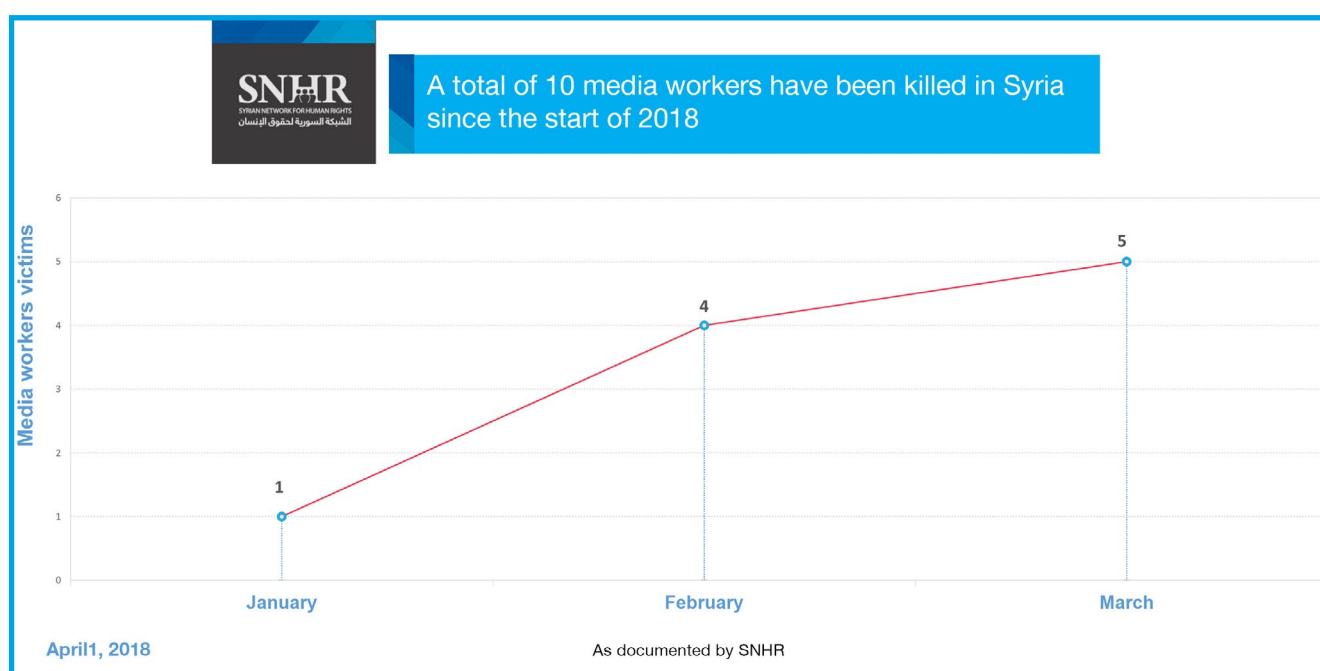
II. March 2018 Outline

For the second month in a row, we recorded that media workers in Damascus suburbs' Eastern Ghouta have suffered the most of the violations perpetrated by Syrian regime forces and their allies, as Syrian regime forces and their allies topped all parties by killing 80% of all media workers killed in March. All of those were killed in Eastern Ghouta.

III. Executive Summary

A. Death toll among media activists since the start of 2018

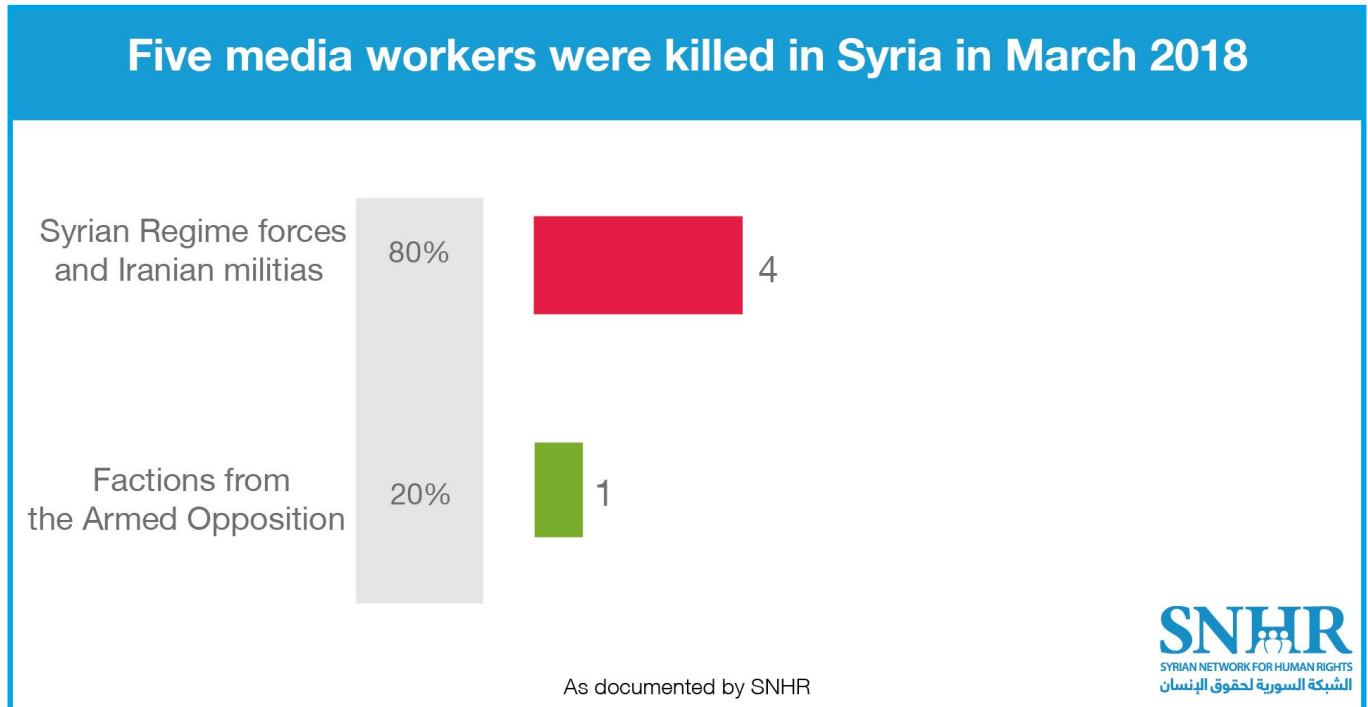
SNHR has documented that 10 media workers were killed between the start of 2018 and April of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria. Death toll is distributed by month as follows:



B. Violations against media workers in March 2018

Violations against media workers in March 2018 were distributed as follows:

- **Acts of killing:** SNHR has documented the killing of five media workers, as follows:



- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 4

- Factions from the armed opposition: 1

- **Injuries:** we have recorded that three media workers were injured, as follows:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 1

-Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): 1

- Other parties: 1

- **Arrest and release:** We've recorded one arrest case where the detained media worker was released later by other parties.

- **Other violations against media workers:** we have recorded one attack by Syrian regime forces.



IV. Details

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)

- Acts of killing

Mohammad al Hanash

Friday, March 9, 2018, Mohammad died of his injuries which were caused by shrapnel that inflicted his head and back in a shelling by Syrian regime forces tanks that fired a shell near him in al Rayhan town, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate as he was covering the clashes between Jaish al Islam, an armed opposition faction, and Syrian regime forces in the town.

Mohammad, [a media worker](#) with Jaish al Islam, a special-needs person (mute and deaf), from Douma city, Eastern Ghouta, born in 1998, unmarried.



Mohammad al Hanash

We contacted Moayad al Hanash¹, a cousin of Mohammad's, who was informed by his family that Mohammad was injured at 06:00 on the morning of March 6 as he was covering clashes on the battlefield of al Rayhan town: **“Mohammad was injured in the head and back. His injuries were caused by shrapnel from a shell fired by a tank with Syrian regime forces. He was rushed to a nearby medical point for Jaish al Islam where he died of his wounds.”**

Ahmad Bashir Hamdan

Wednesday, March 14, 2018, Ahmad [died of injuries](#) that he sustained in most parts of his body. The injuries were caused by shrapnel from [a missile fired](#) by fixed-wing Syrian/Russian regime forces (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) at his house in Hamouriya town, Eastern Ghouta, Eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident, whereas it is currently under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this report.



Ahmad Hamdan

¹ We contacted him via WhatsApp on March 16, 2018



Ahmad, a member of Hamouriya Media Office and member of Ghouta Media Center, in addition to acting in a number of videos. Ahmad is from Hamouriya town, born on December 5, 1992, a student at the Institute for Journalism and Media at Masar Academy in Eastern Ghouta, married and a father of a girl.

Media activist Mohammad Ayman² told us that warplanes bombed his colleague's house at nearly 10:00 on the morning of Wednesday, March 14: **"The missile landed in the house garden near Ahmad. A shrapnel fatally injured him in the head, in addition to the shrapnel that inflicted most of his body. At afternoon, my friends, who were in the area, told me that Ahmad died and his father was injured as well."**

Obayda Abdul Wahed

Wednesday, March 21, 2018, Obayda died of injuries caused by shrapnel that inflicted [his head and chest](#) from missiles fired by fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) in the center of Ein Tarma town, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate while he was covering a previous bombing in the same part of town. The town was under the control of factions from the armed opposition at the time of the incident, whereas it is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this report.



Obayda Abdul Wahed

Obayda, known as Obayda Abu Omar, is an independent media worker and a reporter for Damaski Media Agency, from Jobar neighborhood, eastern Damascus city, born in 1995, has an intermediate education certificate, single.

Media activist Qusai Nour³, a friend of Obayda's, told us of the details of the incident as he was told by the media activist Ghaith Abu Qusai who was Obayda at the time of the attack. The attack was carried out by warplanes that fired three highly-explosive missiles at the local market in the center of Ein Tarma town around 10:00. Obayda and Ghaith rushed to the market to cover the incident: **"Two minutes after they had arrived, warplanes carried out a second airstrike on the same site and they were injured in the attack. They were transferred to a medical point, where Obayda died of severe injuries in the head and chest, while Ghaith sustained minor injuries."** Qusai added that he was in Ibreen city at the time of the incident, but he rushed back to the site: **"The sight was horrifying. Destruction and rubble were everywhere. The injuries were too many and too varied. I saw many children who sustained burns, as well as amputation cases."**

² We contacted him via Facebook on March 15, 2018

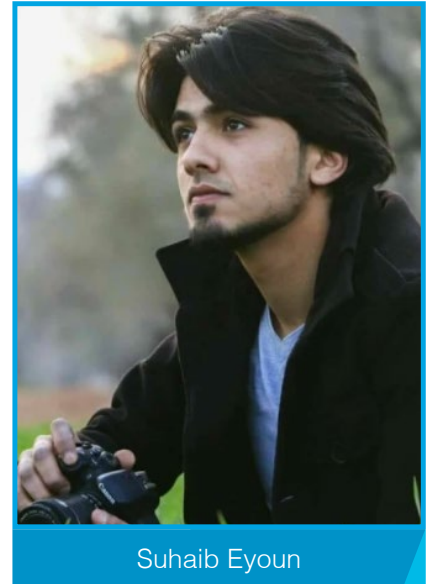
³ We contacted him via Facebook on March 22, 2018



Suhaib Beshr Eyoun

Wednesday, March 21, 2018, Suhaib died of injuries sustained [in the chest and legs](#). The injuries were caused by shrapnel from an artillery shell, as Syrian regime forces shelled Douma city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate with artillery shells. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Suhaib, known as Abu al Baraa, a media worker, works as a photographer with Sham Medical Network, from Douma city, born on March 16, 1998, has an intermediate education certificate, single.



Suhaib Eyoun

Media activist Wael al Tawil⁴, a friend of Suhaib's, that Suhaib was injured by a gunshot as someone shot at him by accident. As he was being rushed to Hamdan Hospital, an artillery shell fired by the Syrian regime landed on the building next to the hospital, and the shrapnel inflicted the lower half of Suhaib's body: **"The shrapnel killed Suhaib instantly. He was buried in the cemetery that is located near the slaughterhouse."** Wael added that the incident happened around 12:30 on March 21.

- Injuries

Abdul Qader Taleb al Mansour

Saturday, March 10, 2018, Abdul Qader [sustained injuries](#) in his face that were caused by shrapnel, as Syrian regime forces rocket launchers, which was stationed in al "Masasna village" checkpoint in northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, fired a rocket at the agricultural lands in eastern al Latamena town, northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Abdul Qader, known as Obada al Hamwi, a media worker who works with al Latamena Surgical Hospital, a student at the physics department, college of science at Tishreen University, unmarried, 29-year-old.



Abdul Qader al Mansour

⁴ We contacted him via Facebook on March 25, 2018



Abdul Qader⁵ told us that a number of farmers were injured by an artillery shell fired by Syrian regime forces rocket launchers at a farm located near al Latamena town around 08:00: **“I headed there to cover the incident and aid the injured, but a second shell landed near me. I sustained various wounds in my body, and minor injuries in my right eye, in addition to injuries in my upper jawbone and losing some of my teeth. I am still under treatment.”**

- Other violations against media workers

The Unified Media Office in Irbeen

Thursday, February 22, 2018, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a barrel bomb near the Unified Media Office in Irbeen city, Eastern Ghouta, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. The office building was heavily destroyed and its equipment were ruined (two laptops and five cameras), as the office was rendered out of commission. We contacted activists from the area on Thursday, March 8, 2018, who confirmed the incident. The city was under the control of factions from the armed opposition at the time of the incident, whereas it is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this report.

B. Factions from the armed opposition

- Acts of killing

Hasan Ali Badran

Thursday, March 8, 2018, [SANA](#) and [other pro-Syrian regime media outlets](#) mourned the killing of Hasan at the hands of factions from the armed opposition as he was covering clashes between “reserve” Syrian regime forces and those factions on the battlefield of al Mohammadiya in Eastern Ghouta. We haven’t been able to identify the weapon that was used and the severity of his injuries at the time of this writing.

C. Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party)

- Injuries

Wahid Foad Qrunful

Saturday, March 10, 2018, Wahid sustained [burns in his face](#) and various parts of his body caused by shrapnel from a landmine planted by Self- Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party). The landmine exploded on the road between al Tefla village and Ali Meqdad village in suburbs of Ifreen city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The landmine exploded near a car

⁵ We contacted him via WhatsApp



that Wahid was using as he was aiding another individual who was injured in another landmine explosion in the same area. The road between Tefla village and Ali Meqdad village is under the control of factions from the armed opposition.

Wahid, [a media worker](#) with al Failaq al Awwal, an armed opposition faction, from Ibein Sam'an village, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born on March 5, 1997, had an intermediate education certificate, unmarried.

Wahid⁶ confirmed his injury: **“Between 9:00 and 10:00 on the morning of March 10, as I was covering the army raiding al Tefla village and their clashes with Kurdish forces which were in control of the town, I was informed that a fighter was injured in a landmine explosion on the east side. I headed there with another guy and we transferred the injured, who was unconscious at the time, via a car. We used the road between Tefla village and Ali Meqdad village to aid him.”** Wahid added that a landmine was implanted on the road and exploded near the car: **“Both the guy I was with and the injured fighter died, while I sustained a number of burns. I was rushed to a medical point in Turkey where I received first-aid. On the same day, they brought me back to a hospital in Marea city to continue my treatment.”**



Wahid Qrunful

D. Other parties

- Injuries

Qusai Salah Khatib

Thursday, March 29, 2018, [Qusai](#) was [shot in his chest](#) during clashes between Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions from the armed opposition) and the Syrian Liberation Front, an armed opposition faction, in the area connecting Bastaroun village and Tqad village in western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, as he was heading for Kafr Hamra village in northern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

Qusai, [a media worker](#) with Idlib Media Center who also works with Sa'ed Charity Association, from Kafranbel city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born on September 22, 1994.



Qusai Khatib

⁶ We contacted him via WhatsApp on March 12, 2018



We contacted the media worker Qusai⁷ who told us that he had to head for Kafr Hamra town as he was taking part in the efforts to prepare housings for the IDPs from Eastern Ghouta who were displaced to Aleppo suburbs. He used a shortcut that passes through Tqad village, which is under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, and then Bastaroun village which is under the control of Nour al Din Zenki faction. He encountered a berm at the entrance: **“And the shooting at me started suddenly. I didn’t know who was shooting as I was in an area located between two warring factions. I tried to raise my hand to notify that I am a civilian, but a bullet went through the car I was in and landed in my chest. I got off the car and started screaming, and the shooting stopped. Nour al Din Zenki faction told me to come to them and they rushed me to al Huda Hospital in Hour town, where they removed the bullet that got 2 cm into my body from the side of my heart. Afterwards, a vehicle belonging to Sa’ed Charity transferred me home.”**

- Arrest and release

Fadi Wahid Qarqouz

Saturday, April 8, 2017, he was arrested by the Lebanese General Security in Aarsal town as he went there to acquire a refugee identification in order to be able to leave the camp he lives in which is located in Aarsal town to another area. However, Fadi was arrested after he was beaten by unknowns at Aarsal Border Camps in Lebanon, as his mobile phone was taken away as well. On Saturday, March 31, 2018, he was released. Fadi, known as Fadi Sony, is a media worker with al Qsair Media Office and Orient News TV channel, from al Qsair city, southern suburbs of Homs governorate, born in 1985.



Fadi Qarqouz

Media worker Fadi⁸ told us that the Lebanese General Security arrested him on April 8, 2017, in Aarsal town, Lebanon, as he was heading for their center to acquire a refugee identification that would facilitate his movement in Lebanon, after he was beaten and his media equipment were taken away by unknowns in Aarsal area: **“After I was arrested, I was transferred to Beirut city where I was taken from one interrogation branch to another. During the interrogation, I experienced all kinds of torture and beating, which forced me to confess to things I didn’t do. I was left in a disciplinary military prison for 21 days over the course of the interrogation.”** Fadi added that the prison lacks the most basic life needs: **“I was detained for 11 months and a half on charges of terrorism for ISIS, before the Military Court sentenced me to one judicial year in prison (nine months according to the laws of Lebanon)”**

⁷ We contacted him via Facebook on April 1, 2018

⁸ We contacted him via Facebook on April 1, 2018



V. Recommendations

Security Council

Work on fighting the policy of impunity by referring the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

OHCHR

Condemn the targeting of media workers in Syria and shed light on their sacrifice and suffering.

Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the targeting of media workers specifically, given their integral role in recording incidents in Syria.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International and Arabic media institutions

Support their colleagues in the field of media by publishing periodic reports that shed light on their daily suffering and memorialize their sacrifice. Also, they must contact their families to console them.

Finally, all parties have to respect the international humanitarian law in their areas of control with respect to the protection of civilians and especially media workers and their equipment.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most heartfelt condolences go to the victims' families. We also would like to thank the friends and families of media workers who contributed effectively to this report.





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