



Russian Forces Destroy a Market in Areeha and Kill its People Following the Steps of the Syrian Regime

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I. Introduction

Areeha city is located southern to Idlib city, eastern to Jisr Al Shoughour and northern to Ma'art Al Noaman city. Lately it has been under the control of Al Fateh Army, a joined force of some armed opposition groups and Al Nusra Front. Further, offices of Al Fateh Army are located on the periphraisis of the city.

In this report we document the shelling incident that was perpetrated on a market in Areeha city by alleged Russian warplane.

SNHR communicated with several activists and residents and conducted several interviews, where three interviews are depicted in this report. We explained the goal of the interviews to the witnesses and were granted their consent to use the information they provide in this report. We verified the photos and videos we had received, and we kept copies of all the video clips and images used in this report.

Through careful examination of the photo and video evidence, we concluded that the airstrikes have targeted a purely civilian marketplace void of any military or weapons depots neither during nor before the attack.

The information contained in this report represents the minimum of massacres and violations committed by the alleged Russian shelling. Also, it does not include the social, economic, and psychological impact of these violations.

The Russian forces denied all these accusations and stated via its media outlets that they targeted ISIL military headquarters. Also, it is worth noting that the Russian forces accused SNHR of presenting misleading and false information.





II- Report Details:

On 29 November 2015, alleged Russian warplanes launched three rockets on a market in the center of Areeha market which killed 36 civilians, including 4 children. More than 72 individuals were injured; more than 20 shops and 25 cars were destroyed.

In our [periodic report](#) that documents the targeting of the vital facilities, this market was targeted by Syrian government forces earlier on 3 August 2015 and it was almost destroyed. Mohamad Jattal, a media activist from Areeha city was near the market and went directly to the shelling location. He gave SNHR his testimony:

“I was next to the market when opposition observatories announced that some Russian warplanes took off from Hameem Airport which is considered a Russian military base. Few minutes later, one of the warplanes launched an airstrike on the market downtown of Areeha city. This same market was targeted 3 months earlier by government forces where 40 individuals were killed back then and more than 70% of the market was destroyed. The government warplane that launched the rockets fell after the airstrike. In 2013, the same market witnessed another massacre when 50 individuals died by government mortar missiles.

The Russian warplanes launched 3 rockets that fell on the market. One of the rockets fell on a civilians’ gathering which turned them to body parts. We could not identify their identities up to this moment.

The rockets caused huge damage and it was as if it were vacuum rockets. The shelling destroyed what was left of the market where 20 shops were almost completely destroyed. Most of the victims were vendors who sold their products in the market.

Since the Russian warplanes started its airstrikes, the city became free of any presence of Al Fateh Army presence to protect the residents from the shelling; however, it seems that Russian considers civilians as a target.”





SNHR was able to interview relief-aid activist Omar Rihawi, a resident in Areeha city. He gave SNHR his testimony:

“Usually the Russian warplanes are active during the morning time in southern Aleppo suburbs, however, that day the observatories announced that warplanes left Hameem Airport. Few minutes later we heard powerful blast sounds. I was in the northern side of the city and went directly to the shelling location. The warplanes had targeted the market that is in the city centre. Death was the master of the situation back then. I saw bodies and body parts combined with the rubble from the shelling and the vegetables from the market. It was awful. The market was targeted by three rockets that fell almost in the middle of the market and completely destroyed seven shops, and damaged almost 25 other shops. Civil Defense teams arrived to the region and pulled the dead bodies from under the rubble and took the injured people to the medical points. However, the medical points could not receive all the injured people at once due to the lack of medical supplies. Russian and Syrian regime warplanes have both targeted this market.”

Mohamad Ameen, a media activist and photographer who was near the shelling location gave SNHR his testimony:

“The opposition observatories announced that a Russian warplane has taken off from Hameem Airport. A minute later it was roaming over Areeha. It shelled a vacuum rocket that targeted the market. It was about 9 or 9 thirty a.m. at rush hour in the market. I saw the warplane and tried to capture a picture of it. It was flying on a high altitude before it shelled the market that was previously





shelled in August by government forces. That day the Russian forces came and finished the Syrian government's job by shelling the market again and destroyed what was left of it. I went to the market few minutes after the shelling and the scene was horrific. Blood, bodies and body parts were scattered all around the market. I was a woman sitting next to her husband and children's dead bodies. She was sobbing and calling on them. It was devastating. The number of the injured individuals reached more than 70 and we do not have the proper medical equipment to deal with this number of injuries."

III- Attachments:

Victims' List:

- A video that depicts the shelling aftermath on the main market in Areeha city due to the alleged Russian shelling on 29 November 2015:



- A video that depicts the massacre's location on the main market in Areeha city due to the alleged Russian shelling. The video depicts few number of residents who appear to be survivors from the shelling:





Image that depicts the shelling aftermath on the main market in Areeha city due to the alleged Russian shelling with rockets on 29 November 2015.



Image that depicts the shelling aftermath on the main market in Areeha city due to the alleged Russian shelling with rockets on 29 November 2015.





Images that depict the dead children's bodies who were killed due to the alleged Russian shelling on Areeha's main market.



IV. Recommendations:

To the UN Security Council:

- The UN Security Council must take further action as a year has passed since the adoption of resolution No. 2139 without the Assad regime showing the least commitment to halting indiscriminate shelling, which has caused destruction and daily killings.
- It must put pressure on the Assad regime and its allies to stop supplying it with arms and military experts after its proven involvement in crimes against humanity and war crimes. It also must pass a resolution to condemn the sides that supply it with weapons.
- The Syrian file must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those involved in war crimes and violations must be held accountable.
- The UN Security Council must establish peace and security and protect Syrian civilians and their heritage from looting, destruction and vandalism.
- It must expand the sanctions to include all pillars of the Assad and the Iranian regimes as they are directly involved war crimes and crimes against humanity.

To the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

We call upon the High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit a report to the Human Rights Council Rights and other United Nations bodies about this massacre in particular and the massacres that followed.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights must demand the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

To the international community:

- Given the divisions at the UN Security Council, measures must be made at the national and regional level to build coalitions to aid the Syrian people through protecting it from the daily killings, lifting the siege, and stepping up the relief aid.
- SNHR demands that the United Nations and the Security Council to implement the principle of “protecting civilians” (ICRtoP) / (R2P), adopted by the General Assembly in 2005. Syrian people should be protected from all perpetrators.
- Pressure must be put on the UN Security Council to refer the Syria file to the International Criminal Court.
- It must seek to achieve justice and accountability in Syria through the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and the use of the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Acknowledgment

Our sincere thanks go to the local activists and citizens who contributed to this report.

