

The Syrian Regime Dropped no less than 6,243 Barrel Bombs on Syria in 2017

Including 312 Barrel Bombs in
December

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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

On December 30, 2016, a comprehensive ceasefire was announced from the Turkish capital Ankara under a Russian-Turkish sponsorship. The signing parties, the Syrian regime on one side and factions from the armed opposition on the other side, agreed to cease all armed attacks, including airstrikes, and stop raids and on-the-ground advancements. The military areas controlled by ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State) were excluded from the agreement.

Ankara Ceasefire Agreement was followed by seven rounds of talks that were held in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, between Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives as the states who sponsored Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. These rounds -the most recent of which was on October 30-31, 2017- discussed mostly, in parallel with a number of local agreements, ways to further establish de-escalation zones in Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and Quneitra governorates in south Syria. Additionally, the talks addressed ways to deliver humanitarian aids and enable IDPs to return to those areas. Since these agreements went into effect, the included areas saw a relatively good and noticeable drop in killing rates in relation to the past months since March 2011.

Despite Ankara Ceasefire Agreement and the de-escalation agreements that followed, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the guarantors- won't see are still going on as nothing had changed.



A de-escalation agreement was reached in Eastern Ghouta between Jaish al Islam, an armed opposition faction, and Russian forces under an Egyptian sponsorship on Saturday, July 22, 2017, and was followed by a similar [agreement](#) with Failaq al Rahman faction that established the faction's inclusion in the de-escalation zone in Eastern Ghouta on Wednesday, August 16, 2017. Nonetheless, Syrian-Russian alliance have initiated a vicious offensive against Eastern Ghouta on the 14th of last November. We released a report, "[The Barbarian Bombardment and Siege on Eastern Ghouta Practically Invalidates the Upcoming Geneva Round](#)", documenting the most notable violations by the Syrian-Russian alliance between November 14-27, 2017.

Vitaly Churkin, the former Russian representative to the United Nations, said that the Syrian regime has stopped using barrel bombs. However, the daily monitoring and documentation conducted by SNHR prove, beyond any doubt, otherwise as the Syrian regime continues to kill and destroy Syria by dropping hundreds of barrel bombs. In this report, we are going to highlight the incidents in which we documented the use of barrel bombs particularly with place, date, and pictures. This report is a monthly report by SNHR.

A distinctively indiscriminate weapon with huge destructive impact, a barrel bomb doesn't only kill civilians but also terrorizes and displaces residents in light of the destruction it creates. Dropping barrel bombs from warplanes in this savage and primitive manner amounts to a war crime. Every barrel bomb dropped is considered a war crime.

According to SNHR's violation archive, the first notable use of barrel bombs by Syrian regime forces (Army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias) was on Monday, April 1, 2012 against the residents of Salqin city in Idlib governorate. Barrel bombs is a locally-made weapon which is used by Syrian regime forces due to the fact that it costs notably less than missiles and it has a huge destructive impact. The use of barrel bombs is based on the principle of free fall and it weighs sometimes more than one-fourth ton and it is a distinctively indiscriminate weapon. even if barrel bombs killed an armed man, this would be an accident as 99% of the victims killed by barrel bombs are civilians and the percentage of women and children victims varies between 12% to 35% in some cases.

Security Council adopted Resolution 2139 on February 22, 2016 which specifically condemns the use of barrel bombs: "cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs." Nonetheless, Syrian regime forces are still, at the time of this report, dropping barrel bombs on armed opposition-held areas on a daily basis.



In some cases, we documented the use of barrel bombs loaded with poison gases by Syrian regime forces which is a violation of Security Council Resolution 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013, and Resolution 2209, adopted on April 6, 2015.

Recently, we have released a report entitled: [“The Syrian Regime Has Dropped Nearly 70,000 Barrel Bombs on Syria”](#) that documents the use of barrel bombs by the Syrian regime and the resultant violations from July 2012, which saw the first use of barrel bombs, until December 2017.

This report monitors the number of barrel bombs that were dropped across Syria, and the death toll and destruction to vital civilian facilities these barrel bombs caused. In light of the difficulties our teams encounter, it should be noted that this is the bare minimum of the actual magnitude of crimes.

The ruling regime possesses fixed-wing warplanes and helicopters. However, the regime denies that it is using barrel bombs the same way it denies perpetrating other violations such as murder, arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture among others. In contrast, the regime denies the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic access to Syria, and bans local and international human rights organizations and independent media. Therefore, this report doesn't include the remaining three parties (Self-management forces, extremist Islamic groups, and armed opposition factions) as none of them has an air force.

All the reports and studies done by SNHR show that most of the attacks were deliberately against residential areas and vital centers in order to demolish any chances to establish an alternative state and an alternative authority in the areas that are not controlled by Syrian regime forces. Otherwise, what is the point of targeting areas that are tens of kilometers away from the frontlines?

II. Executive Summary

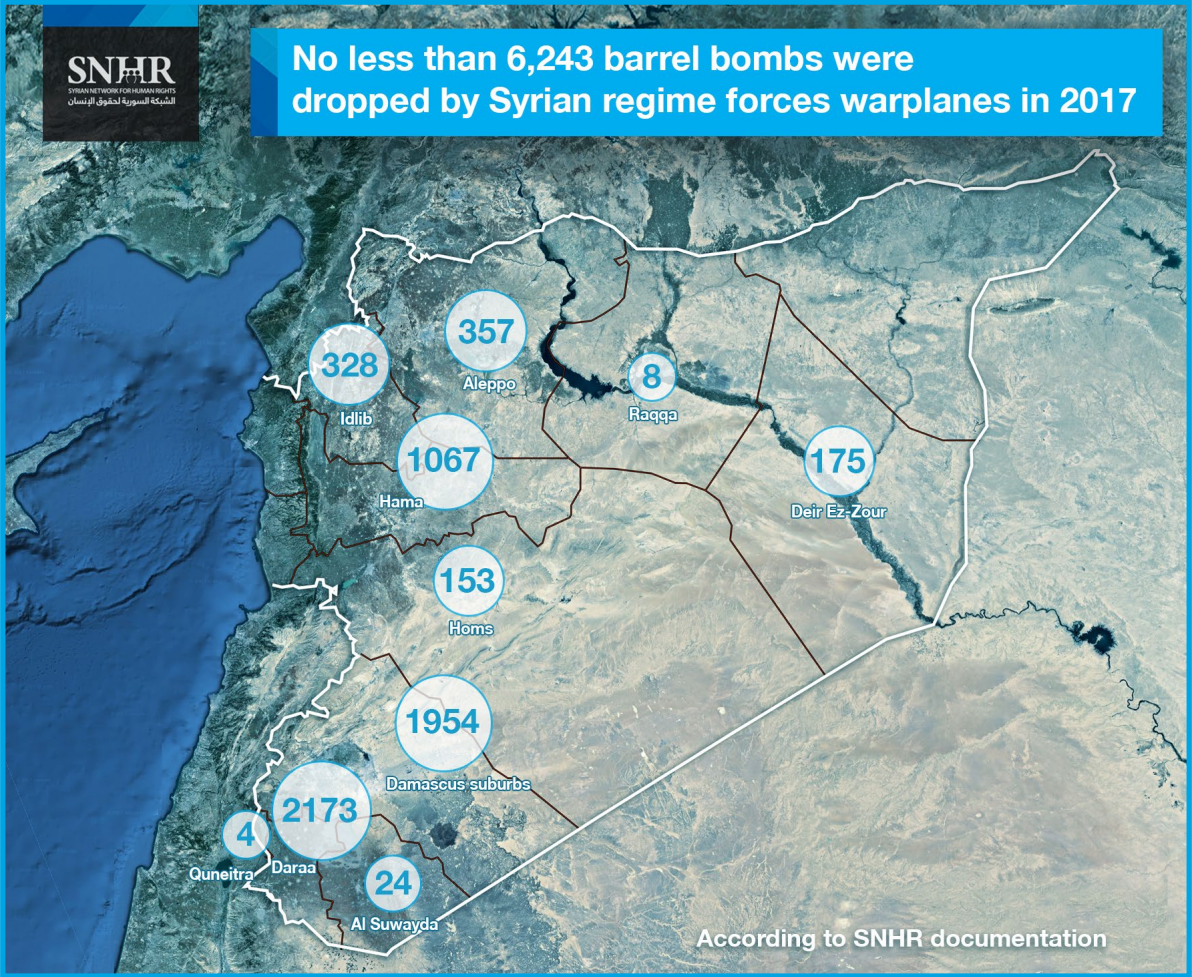
A. Use of barrel bombs in 2017

1- Toll of barrel bombs

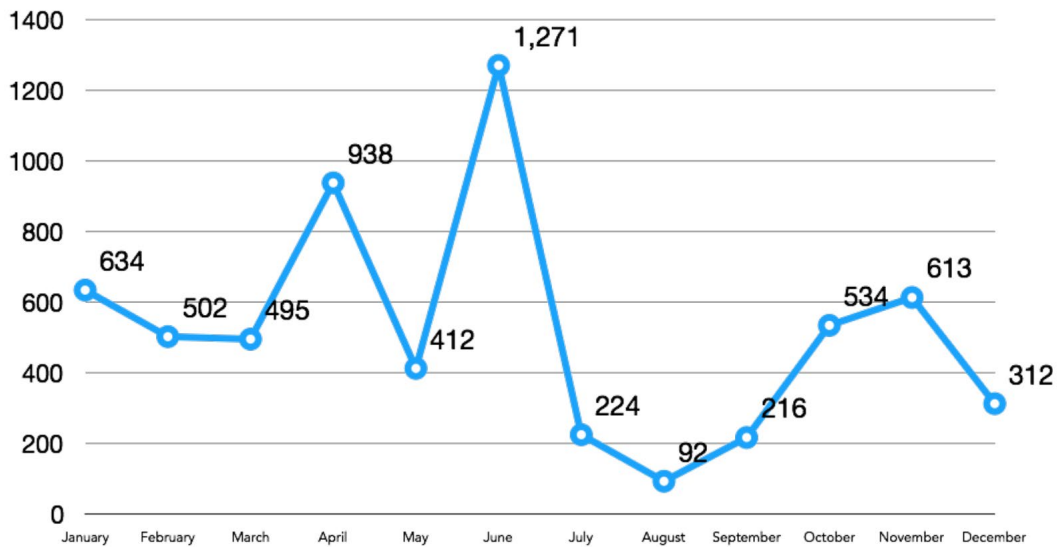
SNHR has documented that no less than 6,243 barrel bombs were dropped by Syrian regime forces helicopters in 2017.



No less than 6,243 barrel bombs were dropped by Syrian regime forces warplanes in 2017



No less than 6,243 barrel bombs
were dropped by Syrian regime warplanes in 2017



According to SNHR documentation



According to the victim documentation team at SNHR, these barrel bombs resulted in the killing of 130 civilians, including 55 children and 32 women (adult female). The death toll is distributed by governorate as follows:

Daraa: 43 civilians, including 15 children and 13 women,

Hama: 20 civilians, including 12 children and 3 women.

Aleppo: 14 civilians, including 10 children and 2 women.

Idlib: 32 civilians, including 10 children and 12 women.

Damascus suburbs: 8 civilians, including 4 children and 2 women.

Deir Ez-Zour, 6 civilians, including 3 children,

Homs: 4 civilians.

Raqqa: 3 civilians, including one child.

2- Attacks on vital civilian facilities that involved barrel bombs

Due to the widespread use of barrel bombs, it is impossible to record all forms of destruction caused by barrel bombs. Therefore, we are going to focus on protected objects and vital facilities such as markets, hospitals, schools and places of worship....

The barrel bombs dropped by Syrian regime forces helicopters in 2017 have resulted in damages to no less than 22 vital civilian facilities, as follows:

Places of worship

- Mosques: 7

Vital educational facilities

- Schools: 3

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities: 5

Communal facilities

- Markets: 1

Infrastructures

- Civil defense facilities: 3

- Bakeries: 1

- Official headquarters: 1

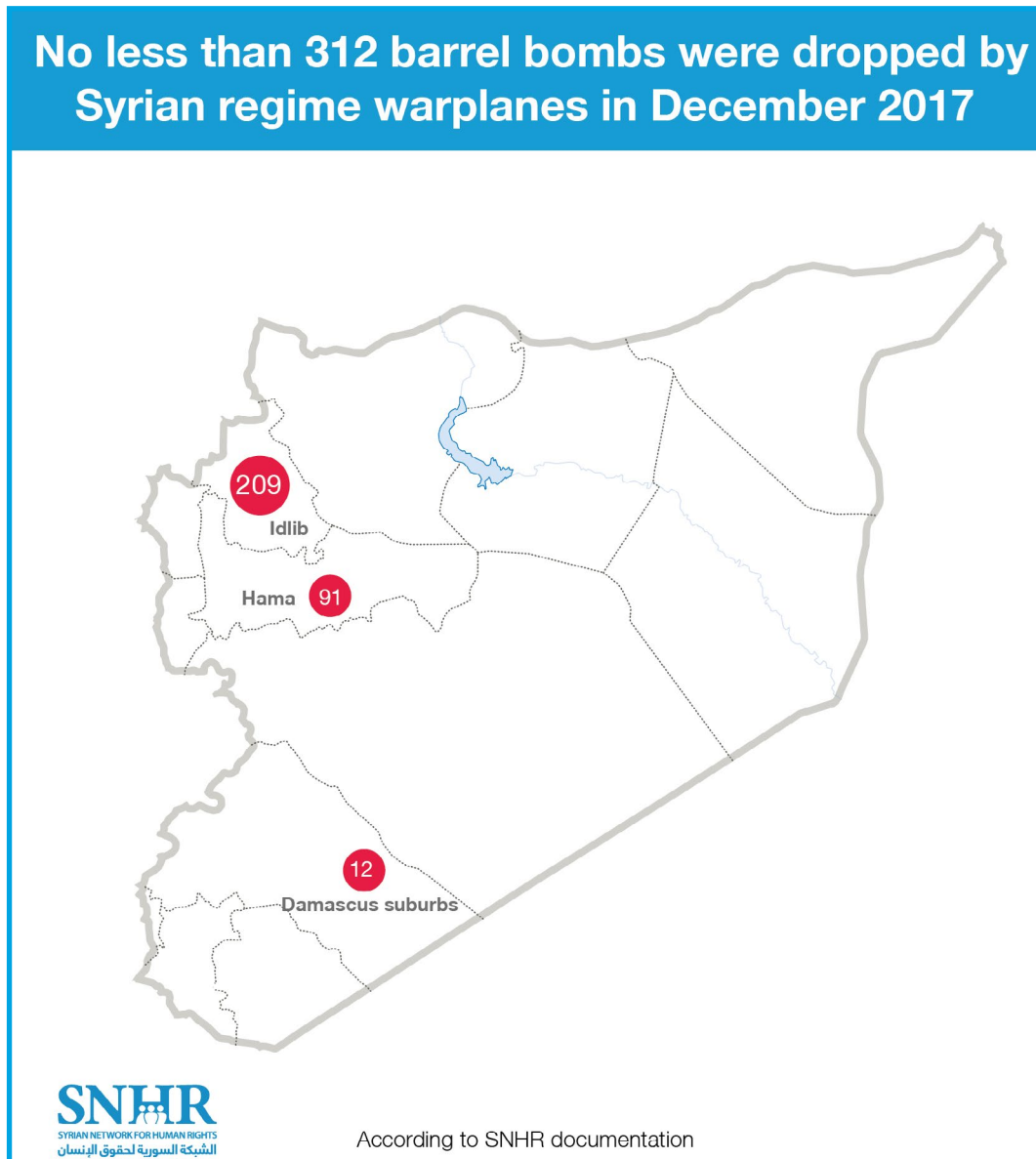
Refugee camps: 1



B. Use of barrel bombs in December 2017

1- Toll of barrel bombs

SNHR has documented that no less than 312 barrel bombs were dropped by Syrian regime warplanes in December 2017



According to the victim documentation team at SNHR, these barrel bombs resulted in the killing of 20 civilians, including six children and eight women, in Idlib governorate.

2- Attack on vital civilian facilities that involved the use of barrel bombs

Due to the widespread use of barrel bombs, it is impossible to record all forms of destruction caused by barrel bombs. Therefore, we are going to focus on protected objects and vital facilities such as markets, hospitals, schools and places of worship....



The barrel bombs dropped by Syrian regime helicopters in December have resulted in damages to no less than eight vital civilian facilities, as follows:

Places of worship

- Mosques: 3

Vital educational facilities

- Schools: 2

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities: 1

Infrastructures

- Civil defense facilities: 1

- Official headquarters: 1

III. Details of Barrel Bomb use in December

A. Most notable victims killed in barrel bomb attacks

Idlib governorate

Monday, December 25, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on houses in [Tal Amara](#) village, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the killing of three civilians (one female child and two women). The village was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Thursday, December 28, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on [al Mshierfa al Shamaliya](#) village, located to the north of Abu Dali village, in southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The attack resulted in the killing of five civilians (four children and one woman). The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Saturday, December 30, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on the eastern outskirts of [Tal Mardikh](#) village, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the killing of one woman while her son was wounded. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



B. Most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities that involved barrel bombs

Places of worship

- Mosques

Friday, December 29, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped [a number of barrel bombs](#) on al Rahman Mosque in Mazra'at Skayyat, located near al Taman'a town, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The mosque building was heavily destroyed and its furniture was heavily damaged as the mosque was rendered out of commission. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Destruction in al Rahman Mosque in the aftermath of a barrel bomb attack by Syrian regime warplanes near al Taman'a town, Idlib – December 29, 2017

Vital educational facilities

- Schools

Thursday, December 28, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on [a school area](#), where the [intermediate school and high school](#) are located, in eastern Babolin village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The two school buildings were partially destroyed and their furniture was [heavily damaged](#). The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction in the aftermath of a barrel bomb attack on a school area in Babolin village
– December 28, 2017

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities (hospitals – dispensaries – medical points – makeshift hospitals)

Tuesday, December 26, 2017, two Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs and gas cylinders -the first one dropped two barrel bombs while the second helicopter dropped one barrel bomb and gas cylinders- in front of al Rahma hospital, which is built inside a cave located by the civil defense center in eastern [Khan Sheikhoun](#) city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The hospital building was moderately damaged. It should be noted that fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes (Su-24) carried out an airstrike with one missile on the same site after rescue workers and civil defense personnel gathered, resulting in casualties. Additionally, the hospital building was slightly damaged. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Infrastructures

- Official headquarters

Monday, December 25, 2017, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on the Free Police Station in the middle of Jarjanaz town, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The barrel bombs landed 100 meters away from the station with no damages recorded in its building. It should be noted that the Free Police uses the former town hall in Jarjanaz town as a base. The town was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



VI. Appendixes and Attachments

Video showing the destruction in the aftermath of [a barrel bomb attacks](#) by Syrian regime forces helicopters in Jarjanaz town, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate – Monday, December 25, 2017

[Video showing a barrel bomb being dropped](#) by Syrian regime forces helicopters and its explosion in Sehyan village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate – December 28, 2017

Picture showing [a barrel bomb that didn't explode after it was dropped](#) by Syrian regime forces helicopters on Babolin village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate – Thursday, December 28, 2017

Pictures showing [little metal balls that were extracted](#) from inside a barrel bomb dropped by Syrian regime forces helicopters on Talmennes town, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate – Saturday, December 30, 2017

IV. Legal Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

1- The Syrian government has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and Security Council Resolution 2254. Syrian regime forces used barrel bombs in a widespread and systematic manner and violated, through the crime of willful killing, Article 7 of the Rome Statute in a widespread and systematic manner as well which constitutes crimes against humanity. Additionally, the Syrian government violated many rules of the international humanitarian law by perpetrating tens of crimes that amount to war crimes which manifested in the indiscriminate and random bombardment that was also disproportionate due to the use of excessive force.

2- SNHR can confirm that the bombardment using barrel bombs is an indiscriminate bombardment that targeted unarmed civilians. Thus, Syrian regime forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, considering that these crimes were perpetrated during non-international armed conflict, these crimes amount to a war crime where all the elements of a war crimes were fulfilled.

3-the Indiscriminate attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces are considered a violation of the customary humanitarian international law, where Syrian regime forces fired shells on residential areas and it wasn't directed against a specific military target.



4- These attacks, especially bombardment, have caused collateral damages that involved casualties, injuries, and great damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators that suggest that the damage was considerably excessive in relation to the estimated military benefit.

5- The magnitude of the widespread frequent bombardment, the excessive force, the indiscriminate manner, and the coordinated approach of these attacks must be based on high orders and a state policy.

6- Syrian regime forces, including all forms and leaders, are involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people in addition to those who provide Syrian regime forces with financial, political, and military support -such as the Russian government, the Iranian government, and the Lebanese group Hezbollah among others. Also, the companies that supply weapons are considered partners in these crimes and are subject to criminal prosecution.

Recommendations

The Security Council

- The Security Council must insure the serious implementation of its Resolutions. These Resolutions have become merely words and, thus, the Security Council has lost all of its credibility and purpose.
- An arms embargo must be imposed on the Syrian government. Also, all those who supply it with weapons and funding must be prosecuted considering the risk that these weapons might be used to commit crimes and serious violations of human rights.
- In the Syrian case, The Security Council is the one who is authorized to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. However, the Security Council has been obstructing this procedure for five years instead of facilitating it and working on instilling peace and security in Syria. The prosecution of everyone involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes must commence immediately.

Acknowledgment and Consolation

Our most heartfelt condolences for the families and friends of the victims, and our thanks and appreciations to all local activists and families who contributed majorly to this study and the investigations.





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