

Russian Forces Killed 6,686 Civilians, including 1,928 Children, Since the Start of Their Military Intervention in Syria

Russia Can't Be Trusted in Any
Political or Reconstruction Process
After Committing Hundreds of War
Crimes, and Hasn't Apologized or
Compensated Any Victims

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, September 30, 2019

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

Four years ago on September 30, 2015, Russia officially announced its military intervention alongside the ruling regime in Syria, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issuing this report on September 30, 2019 to mark the fourth anniversary of this fateful date; while this intervention may have come at the request of the Syrian regime, Russia must still respect the rules of customary humanitarian law while conducting military operations. In the four years since then, the SNHR team has attempted to document and archive violations committed by Russian forces, many of which constitute war crimes, through our team's ongoing monitoring and documentation processes, with those incidents having been analyzed and documented cumulatively using a professional methodology that consistently complies with rigorously maintained high standards. With all of the attacks which we have documented and catalogued, the SNHR team includes details of the place and date of the incident, as well as providing names, personal details, photos, and video footage of the victims when possible, along with first-hand accounts from survivors and eyewitnesses, and photos of the destruction.



Throughout this grueling period, SNHR's team has worked tirelessly to amass and verify a massive quantity of data, collecting evidence of all the incidents that we believe the Russian forces committed or were involved in, either alone or in alliance with Syrian Regime forces or those of the Iranian regime. To mark the current dark anniversary, the SNHR gives details of the violations they have perpetrated during this four-year period, some of which reach the level of war crimes, as well as providing an update of its database of incidents that have constituted violations of international law and an overall record of what these violations have reached. The report also includes a response to some of the scurrilous allegations made by the Russian Ministry of Defense, and attempts to analyze the strategy of Russian forces during the last year.

The following link contains the collected SNHR reports documenting the most notable violations by Russian forces since the start of their military intervention in Syria in September 2015 and the violations that followed, including killing, destruction, and forced displacement. These reports contain a large proportion of the data on incidents that the SNHR has been able to document.

<https://goo.gl/UR67sB>





Satellite Images Obtained by SNHR Prove the Extent of Massive Destruction Inflicted on Khan Sheikhoun City
September 16, 2019

The Most Notable Types of Weapons Used by the Russian-Syrian Alliance on Populated Areas in Northwestern Syria

The Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Commit 33 Massacres in the Fourth De-Escalation Zone Within Three Months

Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Target 31 Civil Defense Vital Facilities in the Fourth De-Escalation Zone in 11 Weeks

Statement: Renewed Attacks Against the Syrian Network for Human Rights This Time by Pro-Russian Journalists Supporting Concealment of War Crimes



Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Target 24 Medical Facilities in the Fourth De-Escalation...

May 29, 2019
After the Security Council Fails to Protect Civilians, an International Coalition Is Essential Outside the Security Council to Protect Hospitals The Syrian Network for Human...



Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Commit Violations That Constitute War Crimes in and...

May 8, 2019
The UN Secretary-General Doesn't Specify in His Statement Who's responsible for the Aerial Bombardment of Medical Centers and Schools The Syrian Network for Human Rights...



Nearly 457 attacks by the Syrian and Russian Regimes Using Cluster...

April 16, 2019
The Syrian Regime is the World's Worst Offender in Terms of Cluster Munitions Use, which has left Thousands of Syrians Disabled The Syrian Network...



SNHR Calls for Sanctions to be Imposed on Russian and Iranian...

October 30, 2018
Any State that Contributes to the Reconstruction Efforts While the Current Syrian Regime Remains in Power is Considered to be Supportive of the Regime...



On the 3rd Anniversary of Russia's Intervention in Syria, SNHR Unveils...

September 30, 2018
6,239 Civilians Killed, including 1,804 Children The heavy and indiscriminate bombardments have been a standard since the first days of the intervention of Russian forces...



Urm al Kubra Village Massacre by Russian Forces is a Clear...

September 11, 2018
Russian Forces Kill 36 Civilians, including 20 Children, in Urm al Kubra village, Western Suburbs of Aleppo Idlib governorate and its vicinity have been the...



South Syria Torn between a Grim Fate of Forced Displacement and...

July 31, 2018
The US Abandons its Commitments in South Syria Agreement The region of south Syria has sealed the complete collapse of the so-called "the de-escalation zone..."



Russian Forces Continue Their Streak of Atrocious Massacres, 6,187 Civilians, including...

July 18, 2018
Russian Forces Kill 52 Civilians, including 10 Children, in a Horrifying Massacre in Zardana village, Northeastern Suburbs of Idlib BY: KEYSTONE / AP Syrian Civil...



Since the Start of the 2018 World Cup, Russian-Syrian Forces Have...

July 11, 2018
The Syrian people was, for a moment, hoping that Russian forces would stop carrying out ruthless airstrikes in parallel with the 2018 World Cup...



Approximately 198,000 Displaced and 214 Killed in South Syria, and the...

July 1, 2018
President Trump Abandoning His Commitments in Daraa Governorate the Same Way President Obama Disregarded His Redline on Chemical Weapons Both the de-escalation agreement, which went...



Idlib Governorate One Year after the De-Escalation Agreement Commenced

June 13, 2018
Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Have Killed 1,109 Civilians, including 255 Children, and Endless Violations SNHR has released a report titled, "Idlib Governorate One Year after the..."



Satellite Imagery Proves that Russian Attacks Have Exterminated Entire Eastern Ghouta...

May 31, 2018
Approximately 3 Million Residences Were Destroyed Completely or Almost Completely in Syria, 90% Were Destroyed at the hands of Syrian Regime Forces and Russia...



Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the SNHR, says:

“We cannot trust any political settlement process sponsored or supervised by Russia, which has, since the early days, supported the Syrian regime in its brutal operations and crimes against humanity, enabling these by 13 UN vetoes. The first veto was on October 4, 2011, that is, before the emergence of any local or extremist military organization, as well as through support for the regime with arms and experts, and finally, through direct military intervention, bombardment and killing alongside Syrian Regime forces, Russia is implicated in war crimes and must apologize for these crimes, then repair what it destroyed, compensate the victims, and stop supporting the dynastic dictatorship of one family in Syria; after that, political transition towards democracy, human rights and the reconstruction and stability of Syria and its society can be discussed.”

Methodology:

In the course of the ongoing monitoring of incidents and reports by the SNHR team through a wide network including dozens of various sources that have been built over an accumulation of extensive relations since the start of our work in 2011, when we receive information, or hear some news about a violation via the internet or media outlets, we work to follow up on these reports and try to verify them and collect as much evidence and data as possible in every case. In some cases, the researcher is able to visit the incident location at the soonest opportunity. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks to any researcher and the frequency of daily incidents, and in light of the limited human and material resources at hand. Therefore, the possibility of accessing evidence varies from one case to another, and, hence, the degree to which we are able to investigate, analyze and classify the data. Usually, what we at SNHR do in such cases is to rely on accounts from survivors who experience the violation firsthand, attempting always to access those directly, and, secondly on accounts from those who saw or filmed the violation. We also analyze all available materials from open sources such as the internet and media outlets. Thirdly, we try to speak to medical personnel who treated the injured in these incidents, examined the deceased victims' bodies, and identified the cause of death.

As pointed out in our previous reports, we have relied on a number of determinants for assigning responsibility to Russian forces in specific incidents, including cross-checking information and statements published by pro-Russian authorities' media outlets against what we have documented on the ground. Russian authorities, however, stopped revealing the locations of their attacks in Syria three months after the military intervention started, perhaps realizing that these statements were useful to investigators because they enabled our team



to cross-check these incidents against eyewitnesses' accounts that we were able to acquire, which gave us strong indicators providing compelling evidence that Russian forces were responsible for specific incidents. Apparently, Russian forces ended their publication of statements after noticing that a number of human rights groups, including SNHR, had used these statements to expose them. Since then, Russian forces has adopted a policy of blanket denial, so we have had to cross-check a large number of accounts, most of which were from central signal operators who work on tracking the movement of the warplanes that take off from Syrian or Russian airbases and pinpointing their course. In many attacks, observatory operators were able to specify the models of these warplanes and their flight codes.

In many cases, we have utilized the variation in the attacks the destructive power seen in Russian attacks compared to that of government forces to assign responsibility to Russian forces in specific attacks, in addition to the fact that the Russian air force has the ability to fly and bomb at night.

In the last year, the fourth year of Russian intervention, we noticed that Russian forces were no longer merely launching air attacks, but were also engaged in ground attacks and had reinforced their presence on the ground, launching ground attacks by artillery and tanks, with various media reports whose accuracy we could not determine - mentioning Russia's recruitment of mercenaries fighting for pay alongside its ground forces. If we can determine, to some extent, who is responsible for the air attacks and distinguish the Syrian regime air force's attacks from those of the Russian air force, then in the case of ground attacks by tanks and artillery, determining and assigning responsibility is much more complicated; we have assigned most of the ground attacks to Syrian Regime forces, and in some cases we have referred to the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in those cases where we could verify the presence of Russian forces in the area from which the ground attacks were launched; however, such verification is difficult and rare, and we are still trying to develop better cognitive and analytical mechanisms that enable us to distinguish the Syrian regime's attacks from those of the Russian regime.

This report contains four accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, none of which are cited from any open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided without us offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, and to provide assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias.



The investigations included in this report have proved beyond doubt that the targeted areas were civilian areas where no military bases or armories for factions of the Armed Opposition or extremist Islamist groups were found during or even before the attack. Also, Russian forces failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks as required by international humanitarian law.

SNHR has analyzed videos and photos posted online or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media. Some of the videos posted by activists showed the sites of the attacks, dead bodies, injuries, and the large extent of destruction caused by the bombardment, while other photos show remnants of Russian cluster munitions and containers of incendiary ammunitions.

We retain copies of all the videos and photos included in this report in a confidential electronic database and in hard disk backup copies. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by Syrian Regime forces and some other armed groups.

Russian authorities deny all of these incidents and crimes, and have yet to launch one investigation, in which they are following in the footsteps of the Syrian regime which has failed to hold any member of its forces accountable for any crimes since March 2011. This failure to acknowledge its crimes certainly does not exonerate Russia of responsibility for them. This report only represents the bare minimum of incidents which we have been able to document, and of the severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. The Russian Ministry of Defense's fallacies and lies, and its attacks on those who expose Russian crimes and lies

Russia denies any bombing of hospitals or Civil Defense facilities, targeting of residential neighborhoods, or involvement in establishing political paths aimed at restoring the regime's long-lost legitimacy and enabling the dynastic dictatorship ruling Syria to rule for more decades even after it has committing tens of thousands of crimes against humanity. Instead, all the statements and media reports issued by or on behalf of Russian authorities claim that Russia is engaged solely in killing terrorists and assisting the Syrian people, that it has shown no favoritism towards the Assad family, and that its forces are fully bound by international law. The most prominent of these lies are embodied in the following main points:



One: The lie that Russian forces have concentrated their attacks and bombardment on ISIS forces and areas under the terror organization's control:

Russia has built the rationale for its intervention primarily on the claim that US-led International Coalition forces have failed to fight terrorist organizations, stating repeatedly that its forces have mainly or exclusively targeted locations affiliated with radical Islamic organizations (ISIS, Fateh al Sham, Jund al Aqsa). Analysis of the data on hundreds of Russian attacks exposes this as a blatant falsehood, as we have clearly demonstrated:

A. Russian forces have deliberately targeted civilians, often directly and in a focused manner, killing a large number of these civilians. The level of the civilian death toll SNHR has documented as being killed at the hands of Russian forces exceeds the civilian death toll SNHR has documented as being killed at the hands of the ISIS terrorist group.

B. The deliberate and chaotic aerial attacks carried out by Russian forces constitute part of a clear strategy that supported the Syrian regime to regain control of areas outside its control, causing the razing and destruction of entire cities, towns and villages that were never under ISIS control and where the terror group had no presence, such as the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo, the cities and towns of Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs, and more recently Khan Sheikhoun city. We at the SNHR have obtained and analyzed satellite images of several cities and areas across Syrian territory which clearly show the massive extent of the destruction in these areas before Russian attacks, and after them when the Syrian regime forces took control over them.

In contrast, meanwhile, the ISIS-controlled areas showed that that they were far less exposed to Russian raids.

C. Russia has particularly targeted and weakened various moderate Armed Opposition factions, particularly those which opposed the Astana Path Agreement, by bombing their headquarters and intensifying the bombing of areas under their control in order to displace the local populations and control these areas in an attempt to completely end the existence of these moderate factions; in a near repeat of this tactic, we have noticed that Russia has repeatedly acted as a supposed guarantor of multiple cease-fire agreements and truces which it then automatically disregards and violates, or supports its ally, the Syrian regime, to violate either separately or jointly with Russian forces.



Two: Denial of killing civilians and targeting vital civilian facilities:

The Russian Ministry of Defense has issued statements categorically denying its responsibility for massacres of civilians or bombardment and destruction of infrastructures and vital civilian facilities. The SNHR team has cross-checked a number of incidents for which the Russian Ministry of Defense denied responsibility with the database of Russian violations that we documented; we found that in all these incidents recorded on our database Russian forces were clearly directly involved in committing violations, some of which constitute war crimes.

On the other hand, when analyzing the data of the Russian Ministry of Defense, we found repeatedly that whenever Russia announces its operations and the results of its airstrikes, it declares generally and indeterminately that it has killed thousands of terrorist militants, without specifying the areas and neighborhoods where this happened, and without mentioning or identifying the terrorist organization in question and the locations under its control. A report by the Russian Ministry of Defense also claimed that it had [recovered some 900 educational facilities and 200 medical centers](#). According to our database, however, since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria, Russian forces have carried out at least 190 attacks on medical facilities and 201 attacks on schools.

Three: Pretending that conditions are stable for the return of refugees and IDPs and thus for reconstruction:

The Russian Ministry of Defense regularly depicts the situation in Syria as returning to normal, in order to prepare the ground for discussions of the start of reconstruction. [The latest report](#) published by the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that approximately 650,000 Syrians had returned to Syria from countries of asylum, and a further approximately 1.3 million IDPs had returned to their homes after Russian or Syrian Regime forces took control of areas previously under the control of the opposition. This report did not mention, however, that the latest brutal Russian operations in northwestern Syria have displaced [more than 630,000 people](#). As for its military operations along the entire Astana route, Russia is directly responsible for the displacement of areas of Eastern Ghouta, southern Syria and, more recently, areas in northwestern Syria, with the SNHR estimating the total number of people internally displaced as a result of Russian attacks and disregard for de-escalation agreements as being at least 3.3 million.

As for the safety of refugees and displaced persons returning to the Syrian regime's control areas, we issued [a report](#) last month documenting that the Syrian regime had already arrested at least 1,916 returnees, of whom approximately 638 were forcibly disappeared. At least 15 of these were killed as a result of torture, in addition to the forcibly conscription of hundreds of IDPs and returning refugees.



Four: Despite repeated statements claiming Russia's intention to withdraw Russian troops from Syria, the reality is further military deployments and domination of the capabilities of the Syrian state:

Since March 2016, Russia has regularly declared its intention to withdraw its troops from Syria. This has been repeated on several occasions, [in December 2017](#) and [June 2018](#). The reality on the ground, however, is completely at odds with these claims, with Russian forces continuously strengthening their military presence in the country. Although Russia has repeatedly denied the presence of ground troops in Syria, photographs, videos, and some unofficial Western statements have largely pointed to the expansion of their deployment. [In March 2016](#), Fox News reported that foreign experts estimate that there are between 3,000 and 6,000 Russian troops on Syrian soil. [In December 2016](#), the Russian Ministry of Defense published photos of Russian fighters in eastern Aleppo neighborhoods, but said these were Russian military police.

On July 18, 2019, the Russian Ministry of Defense denied that Russian special forces have been participating in battles in the Idlib region, stressing that there are no Russian ground forces in Syria. However, Russian media accounts published photos showing the presence of Russian fighters on the ground; these included ANNA News, which published [photos](#) on May 25 which it claimed showed members of the Russian military intelligence forces engaged in a mission southwest of Idlib. In August 2019, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov openly [stated](#) that his country has troops on the ground in Syria.

Russia has gradually dominated the capabilities of the Syrian state, particularly in light of the current ruling authorities in Syria, which care only for the survival of the current dynastic family rule in Syria, even if this costs the destruction of the Syrian state and the killing and displacement of millions of Syrians. [In April 2019, the Syrian regime's government](#) announced an agreement leasing the port of Tartus to Russia for 49 years. According to the agreement, Moscow will assume the tasks of expanding the port and modernizing its capabilities to use it for economic and logistical purposes. Tartus port is one of the largest ports in Syria, occupying an area of 3 million square meters.

In the same context, [the statement](#) issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense on September 26, 2019, on the restoration and expansion of the Hmeimim airbase in Latakia in order to increase the number of aircraft there and to accommodate all types of aircraft, is a strong indication that there are no signs of a near-term Russian withdrawal from Syria; indeed, it seems more likely that the situation are heading towards further expansion of Russian influence on Syrian territory.



Finally, Russia did not contribute to providing any tangible material support for the restoration of the facilities and buildings it bombed, nor did it receive any significant number of Syrian refugees, or declare its willingness to participate in the resettlement operations, including of individuals loyal to the Syrian regime, who did not seek refuge in Russia at all, but instead fled to Turkey, Lebanon and European nations. Also, the Russian government has not expressed any willingness to contribute to alleviating refugees' suffering or to host a number of them to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Russia has actively and continuously attempted to discredit and attack anyone who exposes its lies and inaccuracies and reveals to the Russian and international public the reality of what Russian forces have been doing in Syria. In this context, we note that hired and pro-Russian journalists have been [attacking and slandering the Syrian Network for Human Rights](#) without providing any evidence for their false claims, publishing these reports in little-known Kremlin-affiliated 'yellow and black' sites; Russian media then cite these reports and host pro-Kremlin journalists to promote them on better-known Russian websites seen as being more credible, such as the state-owned Russia Today (RT), and the official Russian news agency Sputnik, with the aim of lending legitimacy to these lies and disseminating them on a larger scale.

III. The Russian forces' strategy in the fourth year

Airstrikes and intense bombardments have decisively assisted the Syrian regime in regaining three areas included in the 2018 de-escalation agreement. Russian forces have pursued this strategy through carrying out airstrikes on the last de-escalation zone in northwestern Syria (Idlib governorate and parts of the governorates of Hama, Aleppo and Latakia), which was included in the Sochi Agreement, which entered into force on September 17, 2018.

In the first six months, the Sochi Agreement succeeded in a phased significant reduction of aerial bombardment of the fourth de-escalation zone, but Russia failed or did not wish to prevent ground attacks by Syrian Regime forces on villages and towns adjacent to the contact line, which specifically targeted towns and villages of the northern suburbs of Hama and the southern suburbs of Idlib. We subsequently monitored the Russian forces carrying out their first air raid on the Sochi area on November 25, 2018, which was followed by a series of raids targeting the towns of Khan al Sebel and Bksarya in the suburbs of Idlib in early 2019. We were able to document the deaths of 1,726 civilians killed at the hands of Syrian Russian alliance forces since the entry into force of the Sochi Agreement on September 17, 2018, up until September 30, 2019, including 447 killed at the hands of Russian forces.



Since April 26, 2019, in conjunction with the 12th round of the Astana Conference in the Kazakhstan capital Nur Sultan (Astana) on April 25-27, the pace of military operations has increased dramatically and Russian forces have stepped up their attacks and operations targeting civilians and infrastructure. In a period of 10 days only, [we recorded nearly 572](#) raids carried out by the Russian Air Force, in addition to a large number of violations, many of which constituted war crimes, which are still ongoing to the current date; according to what we have been able to document, the Syrian-Russian alliance forces killed at least 1,151 civilians, including 286 children, since April 26, 2019, up until September 30, 2019, with Russian forces being responsible for 21 percent of these deaths.

According to the analysis of the SNHR database documenting Russian violations, we have noted that the frequency of violations by Russian forces decreased in the fourth year of their intervention compared to previous years, and it seems that this is due to several reasons, most notably:

A. The extent of the areas targeted with bombardment and killings has decreased compared to previous years, after the Syrian regime, supported by Russian forces, took control of most areas.

B. In the last three months, Russian forces have reduced the frequency of those air strikes for which we can assign responsibility firmly to them, in return for strengthening their presence on the ground and relying on ground attacks, making it extreme difficulty for us to determine the nationality of the perpetrators of these attacks, and therefore to assign responsibility for certain attacks to Russian forces.

C. We have some indications that the reduced frequency of Russian combat operations has taken place at the expense of increased Iranian influence in the region; it appears that Russian forces may have refrained from involvement in some attacks in favor of unleashing Iranian militias instead, and it seems probable that the aim of this policy is to show that Russian forces are acting in compliance the Sochi Agreement, as if to demonstrate Russia's respect for the Turkish observation points. Based on information SNHR obtained from local residents and activists, the Tal Skik front and the Skik axis in the southeastern suburbs of Idlib witnessed the participation of Iranian militias, including the Lebanese Hezbollah group in military operations at the time when Syrian Regime forces and Russian special forces were advancing on the axes of al Habeit, the southern suburbs of Idlib, and the northern suburbs of Hama, with the local defense forces, Saraya al Ra'd and al Ahrar Brigade, which are local pro-Iranian militias, also participating on the fronts of al Jebbin and Tal al Hammamiyat.



Regarding the bombing of [medical facilities](#), infrastructure, and the [Syrian Civil Defense Organization](#) headquarters, the analysis of the SNHR database indicates that the Russian forces have maintained a consistent pattern throughout the four years in their targeting of medical facilities and Civil Defense centers in particular, single-mindedly identifying and tracking these facilities through intelligence operations in order to bomb and destroy them. In this context, we documented at least 129 attacks on vital civilian facilities in and around Idlib governorate, which covers an area of only 6,300 square kilometers, carried out by Russian forces between September 2018 and September 2019, including 24 on medical facilities, which followed 193 earlier attacks on vital civilian facilities carried out by Russian forces between September 2017 and September 2018, including 35 on medical facilities. Attacks of this nature were then distributed across the four de-escalation zones (Eastern Ghouta, northern suburbs of Homs, the southern region, Idlib governorate and surrounding) as well as areas west of the Euphrates in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour governorates.

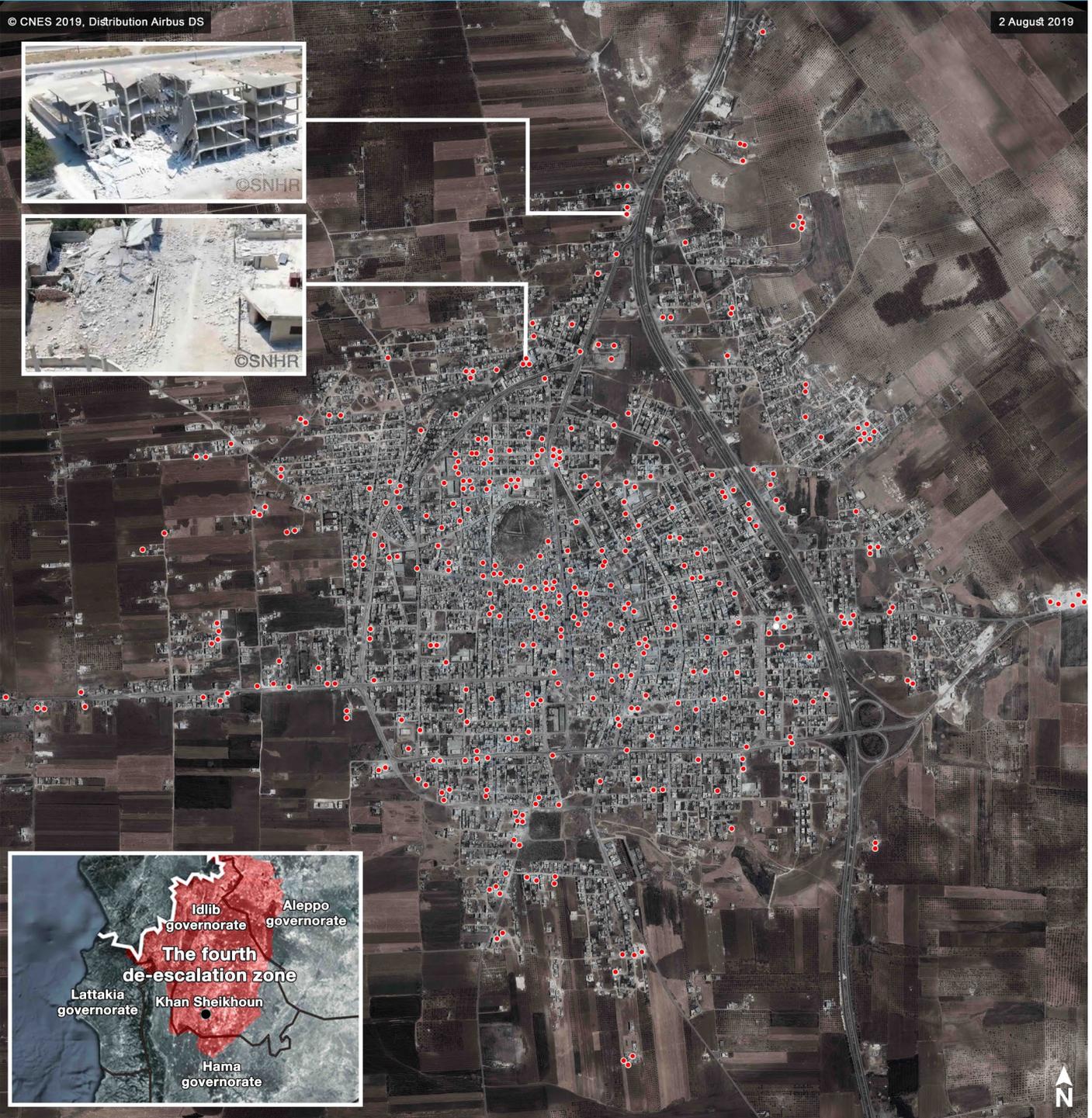
Russian forces have continued to follow the Grozny scorched earth tactic during the first three years, continuing this into the fourth year by planning operations aiming at the widespread destruction of cities and towns outside the Syrian regime's control. We obtained satellite images taken on August 2, 2019, of Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, one of the cities that recently witnessed a serious military escalation, where Syrian Regime forces managed to take control on August 23, 2019. The satellite image analysis shows about 220 points where buildings were subjected to near or total destruction. We cross-checked the locations of most of these buildings with earlier photographs and videos filmed at ground-level which we obtained previously. The results of the collective analysis showed that approximately 35 percent of the area of the city has been completely destroyed, and 40 percent of it partially destroyed. This means that about 75 percent of the city's buildings are either partially or completely destroyed.



Analysis based on the satellite images showing locations of buildings that suffered the worst damage in Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on Khan Sheikhoun city:



Analysis based on the satellite images to identify locations of the buildings that suffered the worst damage in Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on Khan Sheikhoun city, located in the southern suburbs of Idlib, between March 2011 and August 2019



All the above evidence proves conclusively that the aim of the Russian forces is to apply the model of Grozny and Eastern Ghouta to what remains of the Idlib region and to continue the approach of destroying as many buildings and facilities as possible in order to punish the inhabitants of those areas and force them to pay the maximum possible price punishing them for breaking free of the control of the ruling regime and demanding that it be overthrown and a fair, democratic system instituted.

IV. Russia betrayed all the de-escalation agreements, and used them to extend the Syrian regime's control over more areas

Russia supported the establishment of the Astana process with the clear aim of extending control over areas outside the Syrian regime's control one by one and failed to respect any agreement or truce. From the earliest stages of the Astana Agreement, it became clear that Russia intended to control all the de-escalation zones but wanted to do so as part of a political process that avoided the policies previously agreed on in Geneva to ensure that the rest of the world and the international community would not object to or oppose it, as though the negotiations and the progress of the Syrian crisis remained under the terms agreed at Geneva.

A de-escalation agreement that resulted from the fourth round of Astana talks approved four de-escalation zones: (Idlib governorate and the surrounding area, northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs, and parts of the governorates of Daraa and Quneitra) defined their maps and provided for the cessation of military operations, the introduction of food aid, and the return of displaced people. The signs of the collapse of this agreement were clearly demonstrated to us since September 2017, only four months after it entered into force, when Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces launched a large-scale military campaign along the border of the fourth de-escalation zone (the Idlib region) in operations ending with their controlling 45 percent of this zone. In 2018, Russian forces established their goal of destroying the de-escalation agreements by supporting the Syrian regime to tighten its control on three of the de-escalation zones.

Between February 2018 and April of the same year, Russian forces concentrated their operations in Eastern Ghouta and used various types of highly destructive weapons and munitions, with these military operations ceasing only after the cities and towns of Eastern Ghouta surrendered one after another under negotiations that resulted in the displacement of at least 200,000 people, of whom 65,000 were forcibly displaced to northern Syria, as we detailed in [a previous report](#).



At the end of April 2018, Syrian-Russian alliance forces moved to the second de-escalation zone (northern suburbs of Homs and southern suburbs of Hama). The bombardment did not last long before the area was subject to an agreement similar to that of Eastern Ghouta, under which at least 35,000 civilians from the area were displaced to northern Syria.

In the middle of the same year, Syrian Regime forces, backed by the Russian Air Force, began carrying out intensive air strikes and incursions and seizing control of the southern region of Syria, which was the last to witness the collapse of the de-escalation agreement; the southern region had a more special status since it was not only subject to the de-escalation agreement, but later to a more important agreement, the Russian-US bilateral agreement between Presidents Trump and Putin, which pledged a ceasefire and came into effect on July 9, 2017.

Nearly a year after the US-Russia agreement, Syrian-Russian alliance forces violated both agreements and began a violent military campaign in which hundreds were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced, and the population was forced to accept humiliating settlements, where local agreements were signed between factions of the Armed Opposition on the one hand and Russian and Syrian Regime forces on the other. Russia has pledged to protect these areas from violations by the Syrian regime and to protect citizens from arbitrary arrests. We addressed this issue extensively in [a previous report](#) as well.

As for the Idlib region, the last de-escalation zone (consisting of Idlib governorate and parts of the governorates of Aleppo, Hama and Latakia), in early August 2018, we monitored military convoys heading to its borders, a clear indication of the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces' intention to start a major battle to control it. However, the Sochi Agreement in September 2018 emerged as a possible way to stop the military operation in the most densely populated area where there are approximately three million people, either residents or IDPs.

As we have been able to record in recent months, the situation in areas under the control of the Syrian regime, particularly in the southern region, has been extremely poor, with hardly a day going by without us documenting cases of arrests of civilians who were subjected to settlement procedures.

According to [a statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) devoted to the southern region, between July 26, 2018, and March 31, 2019, it received reports that at least 380 people had been arrested or detained in the southern region, 150 of whom have been released, with the remaining 230 at least being subjected to enforced disappearances.



V. Russia continues to support the Syrian regime accused of war crimes

Russia has consistently expressed opposition to military intervention or externally imposed regime change, even if these regimes commit the most egregious violations, which can amount to crimes against humanity. In Syria, however, Russia intervened from the earliest days of the popular uprising before any outside countries to show absolute support at every level for the Syrian regime in all of its crimes against peaceful demonstrators; the first Russian veto related to Syria in the UN Security Council was on October 4, 2011, meaning that it took place before the emergence of any local or extremist military organization. Now, for the fourth consecutive year, Russian forces continue to support the regime in Syria militarily, in tandem with Russia's political support through using 13 vetoes to date at the UN Security Council, and in terms of human rights via always voting against all resolutions of the Human Rights Council, and against any extension to the work of the International Commission of Inquiry in Syria, opposing the establishment of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, and opposing the work of the Chemical Disarmament Commission, in addition to supplying the Syrian regime with weapons and military equipment in a process that has been proven through several investigations by UN and international committees showing beyond doubt that the regime uses these weapons in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes. All of these facts have made Russia, under international law, a direct partner in the crimes committed by the Syrian regime, as well as in the crimes committed by its own forces in particular.

The worst thing Russia has done is to ensure the Syrian regime's impunity. This means that Russia is actively encouraging the Syrian regime to commit more atrocities and violations, and even to increase and intensify these, safe in the knowledge that it will be protected from facing justice for any crimes. After the Russian government used its first veto, the Syrian regime felt it had received *carte blanche* which encouraged it to escalate in cruelty and sadism, up to the crimes of lethal torture and rape, forced displacement, dropping barrel bombs, and using chemical weapons, with Russia being largely responsible for these crimes.

The SNHR supports placing prohibitions on the use of the UN veto in cases where war crimes and crimes against humanity are committed, as is the case in Syria. Russia has used its veto 13 times arbitrarily to protect a regime that has committed the most heinous crimes of modern times, and to obstruct any resolution to hold it to account. It is remarkable that of the 13 vetoes, 6 were regarding the chemical weapons file, this confirms Russia's support for the use of weapons of mass destruction by the Syrian regime. Also, Russia vetoed the extension of the work of the the International Joint Investigative Mechanism in November 2017 after proving the Syrian regime's responsibility for five chemical attacks.

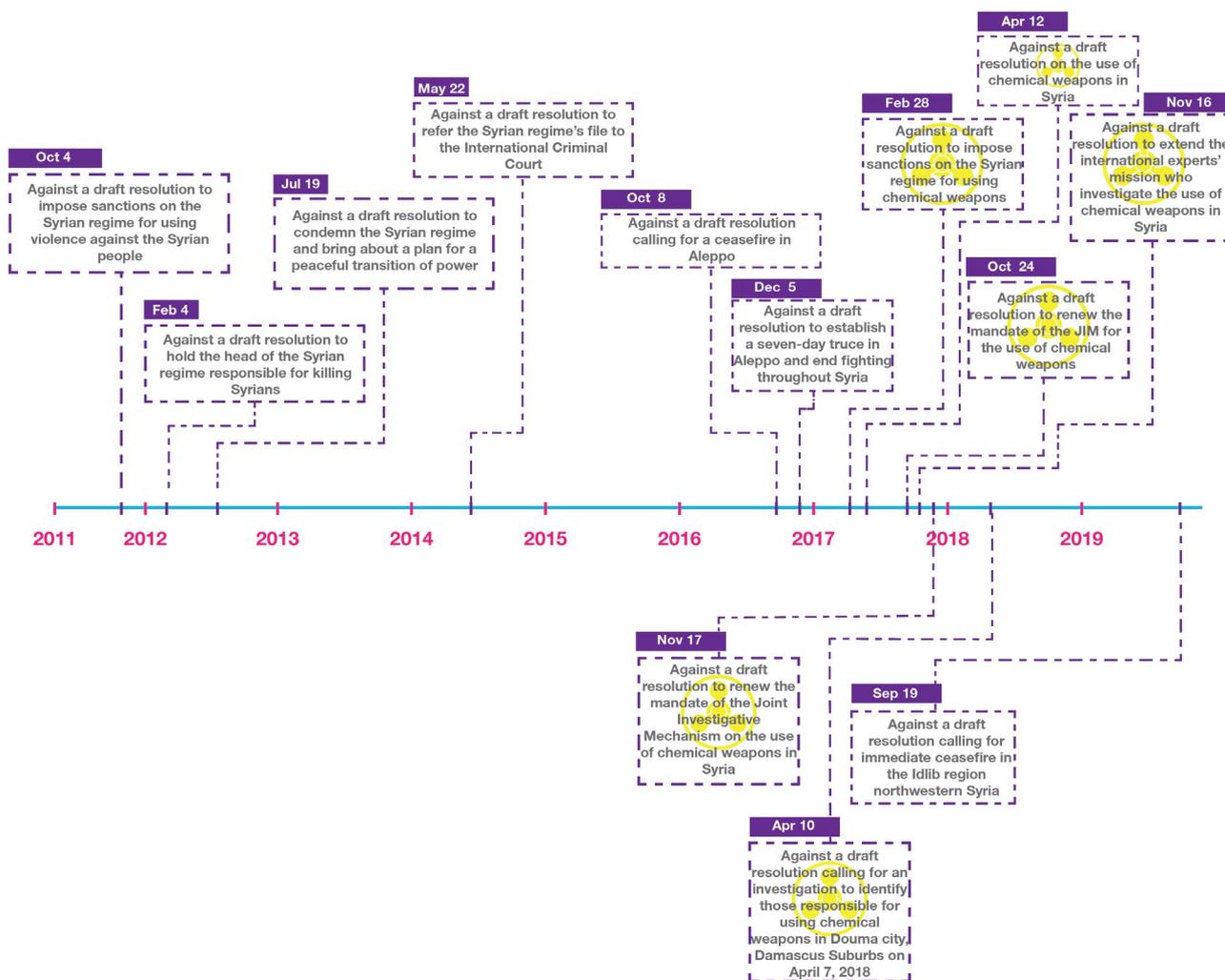


The last Russian and Chinese veto was on September 19, 2019, against a draft resolution calling solely for the cessation of hostilities in Idlib, which clearly means that Russia and the Syrian regime are unwilling to cease hostilities in northwestern Syria and demonstrates their intention to control additional areas, albeit through brutal operations and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

Timeline outlining the dates of 13 vetoes used by Russia against Security Council draft resolutions on Syria, since March 2011:

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Russia has used its veto power 13 times to protect the Syrian regime at the Security Council



Russia's support for the Syrian regime has not been limited to the use of the veto, Russia sought to obstruct and distort UN investigations, as happened in the chemical attack in Douma city - April 2018, and to restrict the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism.

Russia led an alliance aimed at thwarting the new mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which gives it the power to determine responsibility for the perpetrators of chemical attacks, and at a meeting of member states of the CWC on November 20, 2018, held at OPCW headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands, to discuss increasing the budget of the organization, Russia and its allies have again tried to challenge and thwart the new mandate of the organization.

On July 12, 2019, the [Russian Embassy](#) in The Hague held a press conference in which it sought to distort and deny the facts of the use of chlorine gas in the Douma attack; Russian officials presented some testimonies of local residents in the city, these testimonies challenge the OPCW report which confirmed the use of poison gases in the city on April 7, 2018.

VI. Russia exploited its military intervention to demonstrate the effectiveness of its weapons and to test these in practice in Syria; this has boosted the sales of its arms manufacturers

The Russian regime considers Syria a real and effective 'training ground' for testing weapons manufactured by Russian companies rather than testing these in empty areas within Russia, effectively using Syrian civilians as 'crash-test dummies' for its arms industry. The Russian regime has not been shy about repeatedly announcing its testing of weapons on Syrian soil; according to the Russian Ministry of Defense, the military operation in Syria has been used to test 231 models of modern and modernized weapons including warplanes, helicopters, robot tanks and missiles, as well as a large quantity of ammunition, and we have monitored through our past reports most types of weapons the Russian forces have used or contributed since the start of their military intervention in Syria, such as cluster munitions, incendiary munitions, bunker buster missiles, Kaliber missiles, and Tochka-style missiles.

[The Russian Defense Minister, Sergey Shoygu](#), announced that his country has stopped the production of 12 models of Russian weapons after they failed their tests during military operations in Syria, while 300 others have been modified and updated as a result of these operations.



Thanks to the Russian military intervention in Syria and the testing of various types of weapons on the cities and towns of the country and the Syrian people, the rate of Russian arms sales has increased; according to the report issued by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) at the end of 2018, which focused on arms sales by 100 companies around the world in 2017, the profitability of Russian arms companies and their partners within the Russian regime such as Almaz-Antey and High Precision Systems increased by 8.5% in 2017, although all sales of Russian companies around the world had been predicted to fall and be boycotted due to their involvement in war crimes in Syria, as well as supporting the Syrian regime which is involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes.

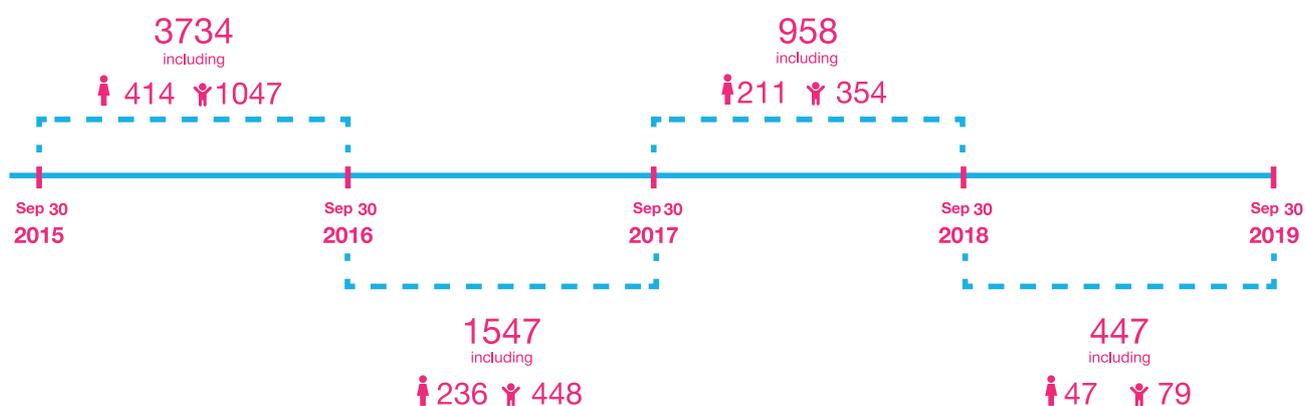
VII. Analysis of Russian forces' violations according to SNHR's database

A. Death toll

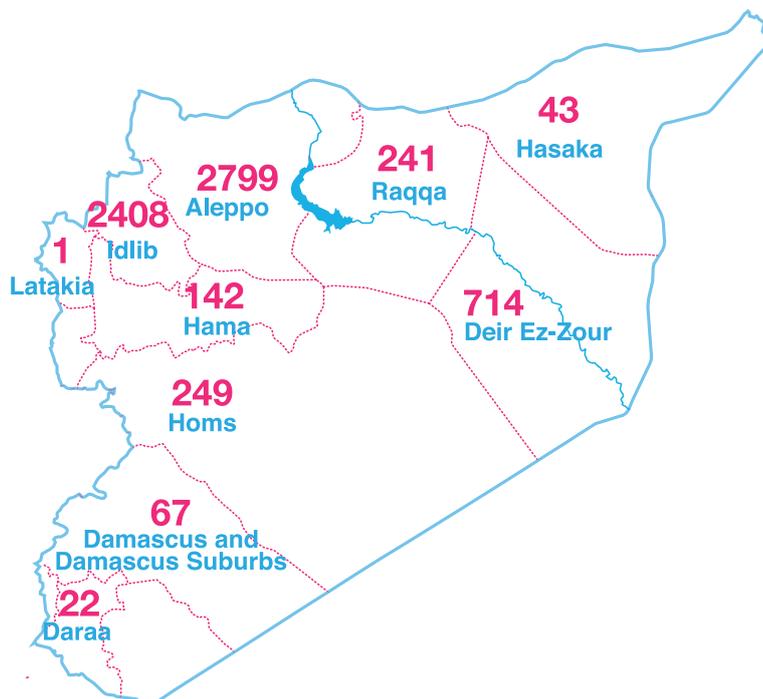
SNHR documented the deaths of 6,686 civilians, including 1,928 children and 908 women, at the hands of Russian forces since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019.

Toll of civilian victims killed by Russian forces distributed by year as follows:

- From September 30, 2015, to September 30, 2016: 3,734 civilians, including 1,047 children and 414 women
- From September 30, 2016, to September 30, 2017: 1,547 civilians, including 448 children and 236 women
- From September 30, 2017, to September 30, 2018: 958 civilians, including 354 children and 211 women
- From September 30, 2018, to September 30, 2019: 447 civilians, including 79 children and 47 women



Toll of civilian victims killed by Russian forces distributed across governorates as follows:

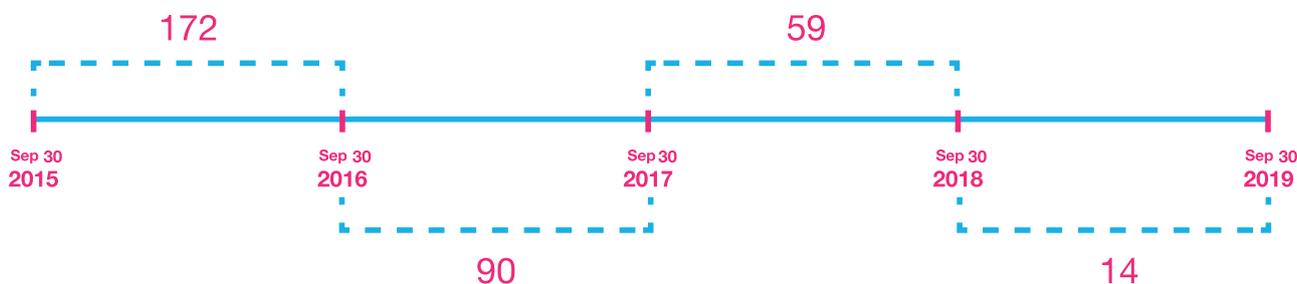


B. Record of Massacres (the deaths of five or more persons in the same incident):

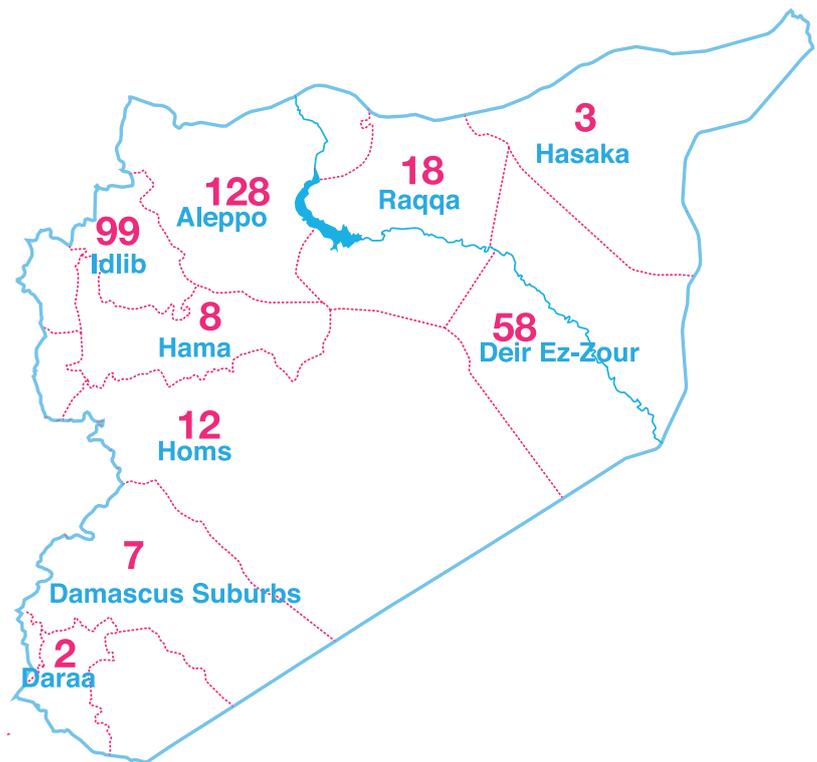
SNHR documented at least 335 massacres by Russian forces since the start of their military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019

Record of massacres distributed by year as follows:

- From September 30, 2015, to September 30, 2016: 172
- From September 30, 2016, to September 30, 2017: 90
- From September 30, 2017, to September 30, 2018: 59
- From September 30, 2018, to September 30, 2019: 14



Record of massacres distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:

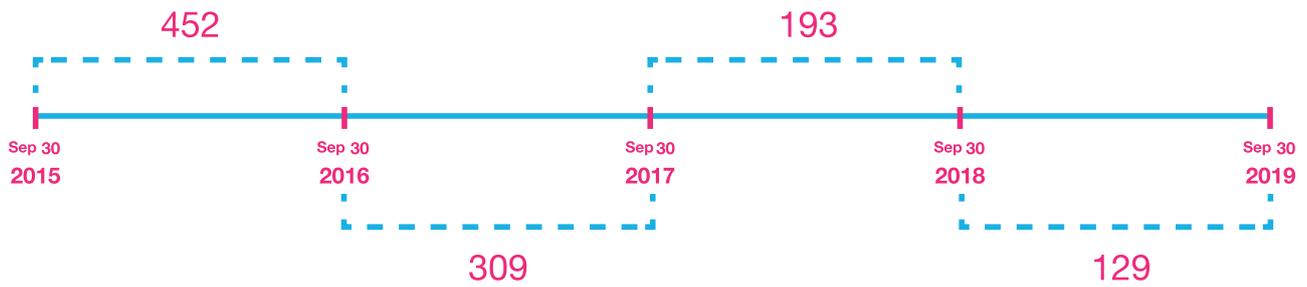


C. Record of attacks on vital civilian facilities

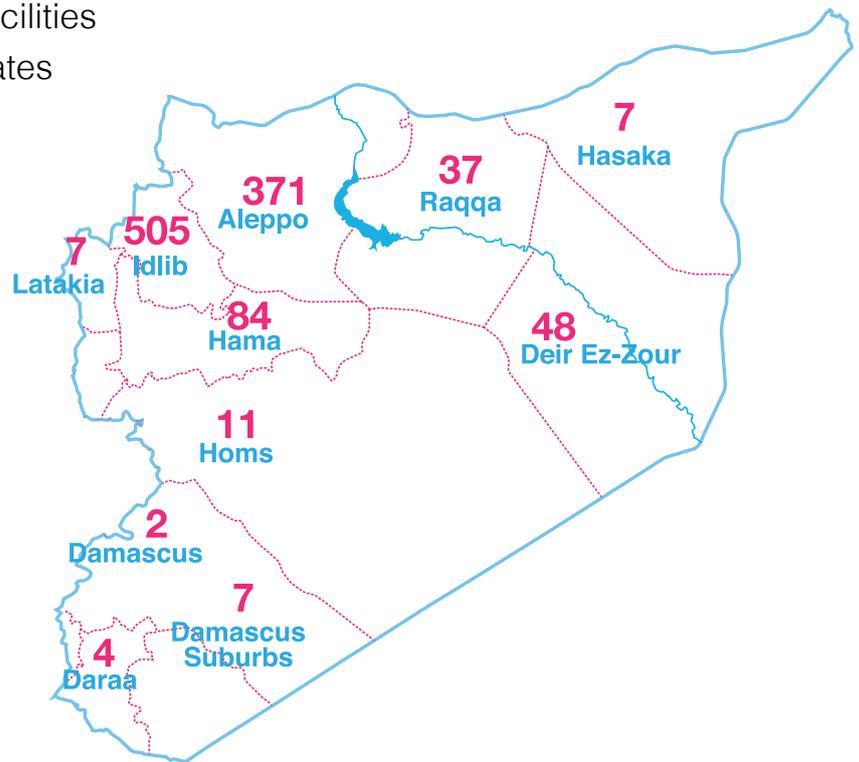
SNHR documented at least 1,083 attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces, including 190 attacks on medical facilities, 201 attacks on schools, and 56 attacks on markets, since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019. Record of attacks on vital civilian facilities distributed by year as follows:

- From September 30, 2015 to September 30, 2016: 452 attacks, including 74 on schools, 77 on medical facilities, and 35 on markets.
- From September 30, 2016 to September 30, 2017: 309 attacks, including 65 on schools, 54 on medical facilities, and 12 on markets.
- From September 30, 2017 to September 30, 2018: 193 attacks, including 37 on schools, 35 on medical facilities, and 8 on markets.
- From September 30, 2018 to September 30, 2019: 129 attacks, including 25 on schools, 24 on medical facilities, and 1 on a market.





Record of attacks on vital civilian facilities distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



D. Toll of victims among medical and Civil Defense personnel

SNHR documented the deaths of 107 medical and Civil Defense personnel killed in attacks carried out by Russian forces since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019.

E. Toll of victims among media workers

SNHR documented the deaths of 21 media workers in attacks carried out by Russian forces since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019.

F. Record of the use of Cluster munitions

SNHR documented at least 236 attacks using cluster munitions carried out by Russian forces since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019.



G. Record of the use of incendiary munitions

SNHR documented at least 125 attacks using incendiary munitions carried out by Russian forces since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2019.

H. Forced displacement

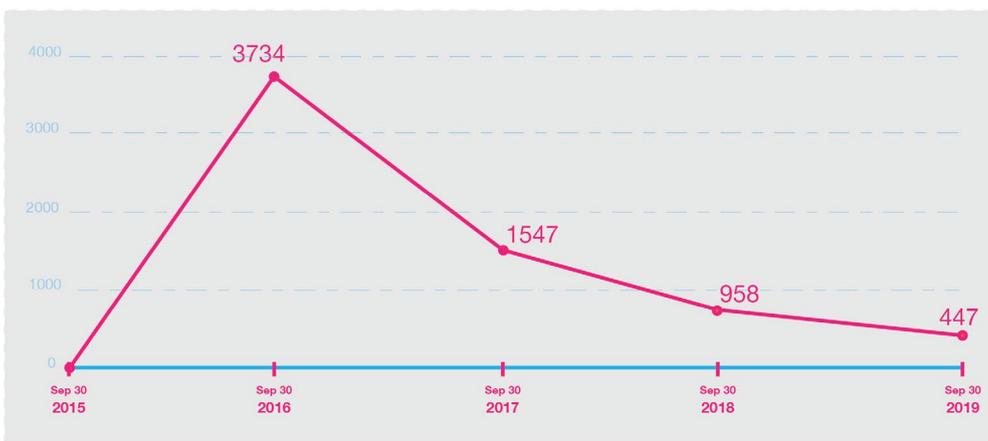
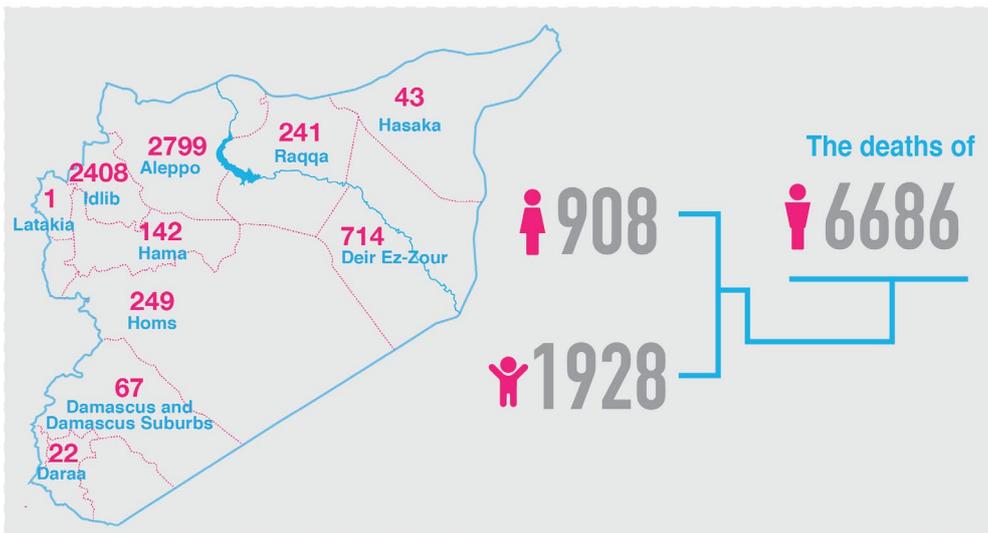
The escalating violence practiced by Russian forces has had the largest impact in terms of exodus and forced displacement, as Russian attacks, in parallel with the attacks carried out by the Syrian-Iranian alliance, have resulted in the displacement of approximately 3.3 million people, most of whom were forcibly displaced multiple times.



Infographic showing the most notable human rights violations by Russian forces since their military intervention in Syria - September 2015:

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The Most Notable Human Rights Violations by Russian Forces since the Start of the Russian Military Intervention in Syria



Russian forces carried out	Russian forces perpetrated
125 (Incendiary munitions attacks)	1083 (incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities)
236 (cluster munitions attacks)	335 (massacres)
	Including: 56 (Schools), 190 (medical facilities), 201 (Markets)

It supported the Syrian regime in at least **three chemical attacks**

Approximately **3.3 million** individuals have been forcibly displaced as a result of the military operations by Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces

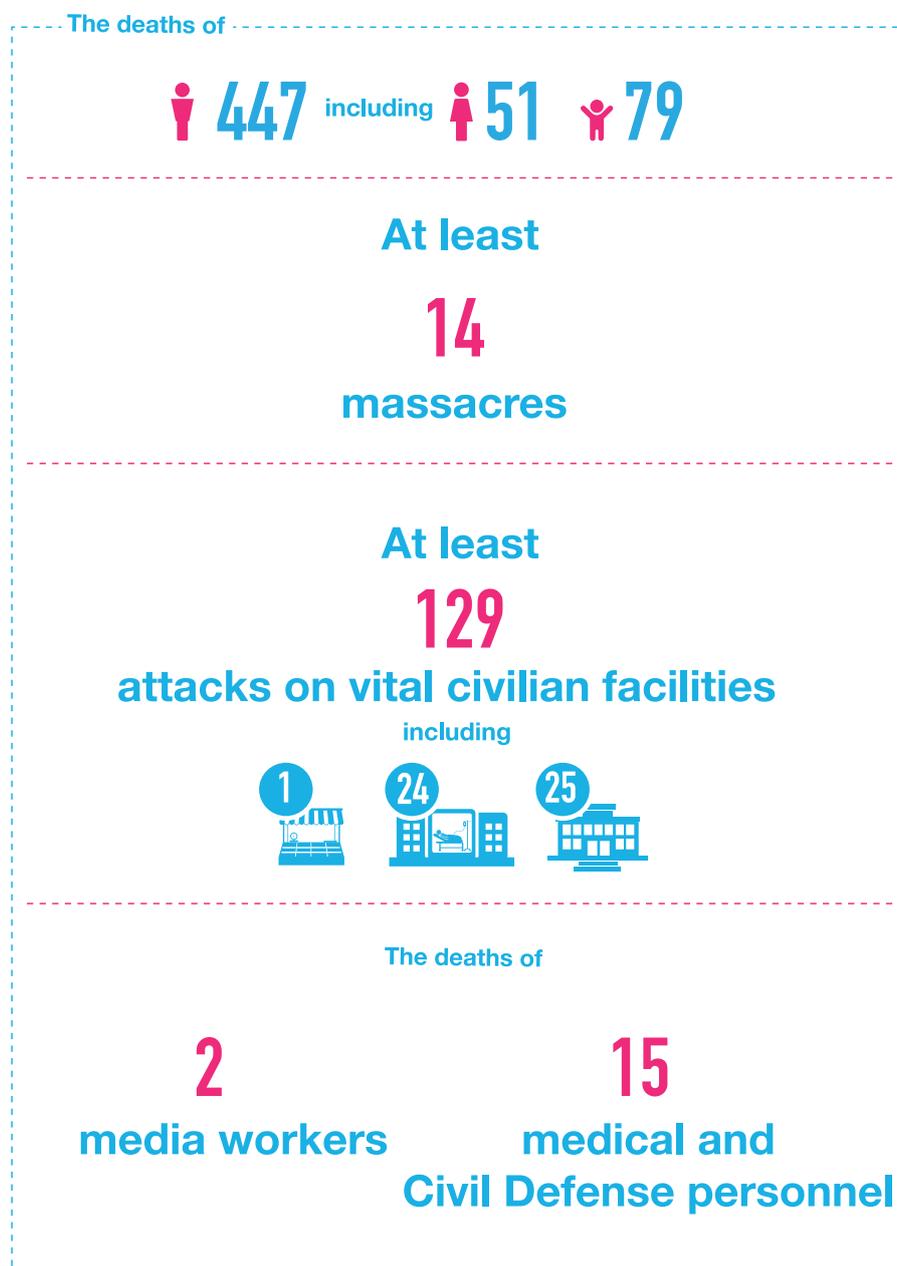
September 30, 2015 - September 30, 2019



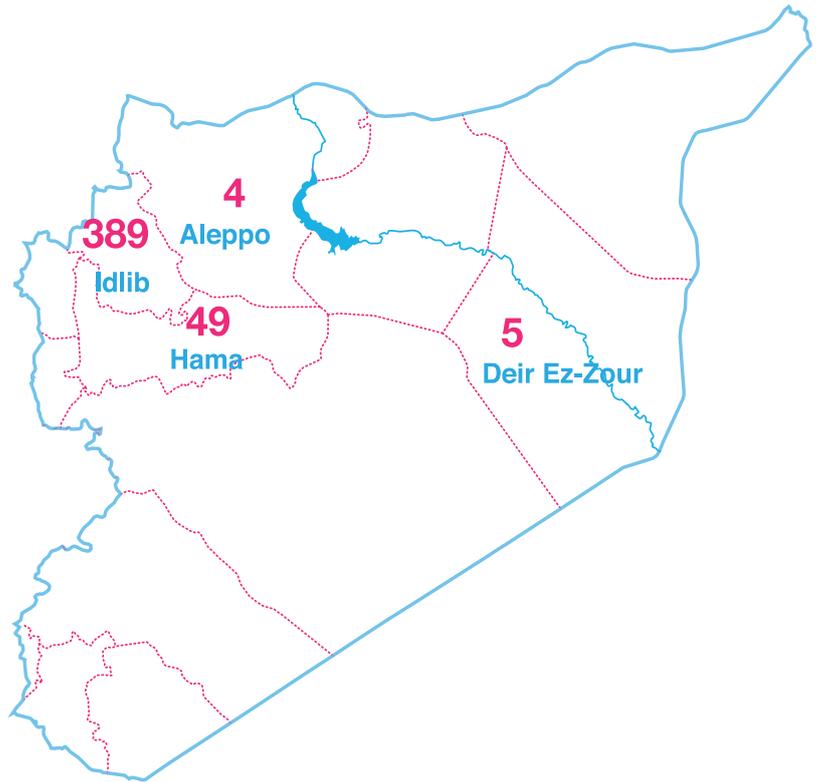
VII. Details Outlining some of the Incidents that Were Added to SNHR's Database during the Past Year

Between September 30, 2018, and September 30, 2019, SNHR has documented on its database:

- The deaths of 447 civilians, including 79 children and 51 women (adult female)
- At least 14 massacres
- At least 129 attacks on vital civilian facilities, including 24 on medical facilities, 25 on schools, and 1 on a market
- The deaths of 15 medical and Civil Defense personnel
- The deaths of 2 media workers



Toll of civilian victims distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



This report outlines 19 attacks in which Russian forces targeted civilian areas and vital civilian facilities, with a number of these attacks resulting in civilian deaths. These attacks took place between September 30, 2018 and September 30, 2019.

We have categorized these attacks in our database into a number of patterns. For instance, there were attacks that resulted in massacres and others targeting vital civilian facilities, in addition to attacks that resulted in the deaths of medical and Civil Defense personnel.

A. Most Notable Attacks Which Resulted in Massacres

On Friday, March 22, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles on residential neighborhoods in the center of Kafrayya village, in northern suburbs of Idlib governorate - for the first time since being out of the control of Syrian Regime forces in July 2018. The missiles fell in an area of approximately 500 meters square, resulting in the deaths of 15 civilians, including four children (two males and two females), their parents and another woman, and the injury of nearly 30 others; up to the time of preparing this report, the incident is still under investigation. We note the presence of several buildings being used as military headquarters by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in an area around 50 meters from the site where civilian casualties fell. The village was under the joint control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and the Turkistan Islamic Party at the time of the incident.





A female child, a victim of a massacre, inflicted by Russian air attack on Kafrayya village, Idlib – March 22, 2019

On Friday, April 26, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at Tal Hawwash village in Sahl al Ghab area in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, which resulted in [the deaths of five civilians](#), mostly [from one family](#), including one female child and one woman. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

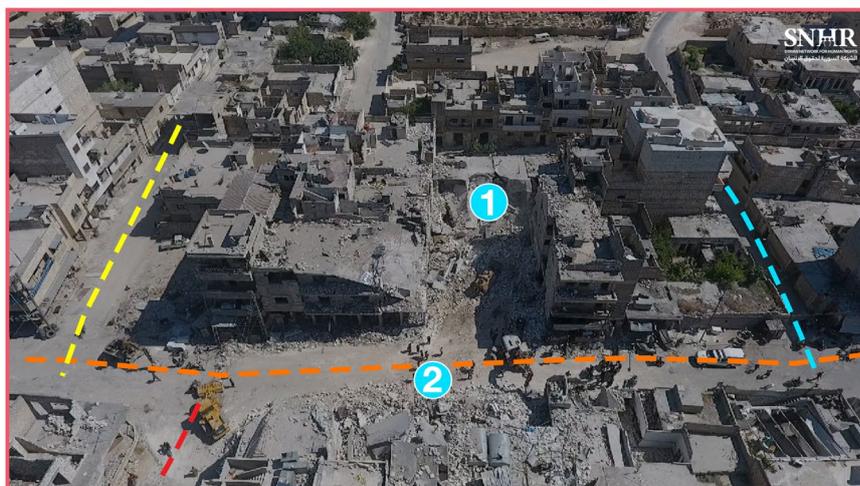
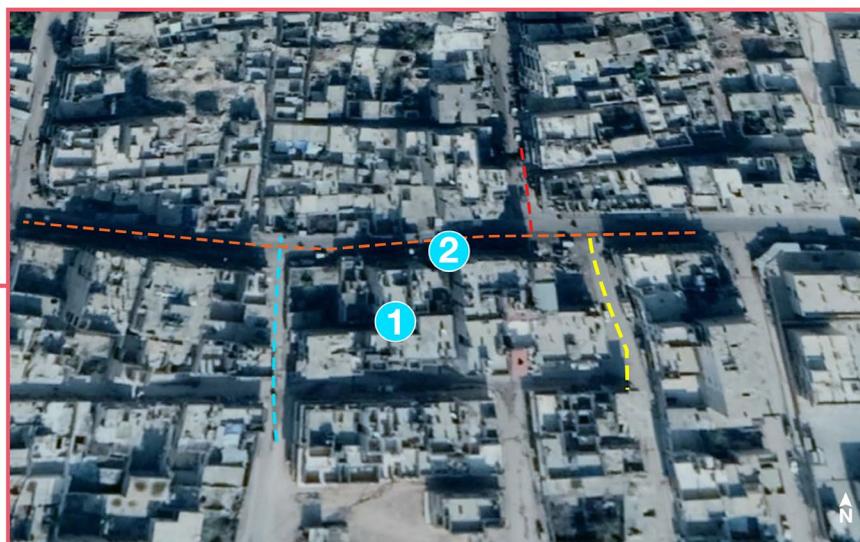
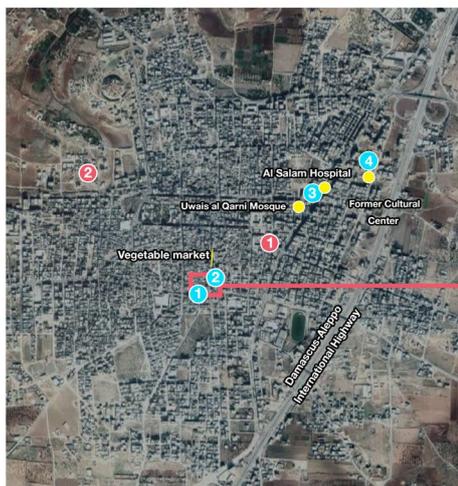
On Monday, July 22, 2019, at around 08:35, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a double attack in the center of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The first attack used a missile to target a group of residential buildings located at one end of the vegetable market, causing several civilian injuries. After about five minutes, when other civilians and Civil Defense personnel had gathered to rescue the injured, one of these warplanes launched a new raid on the same site, with the second missile landing in the middle of the street, about 10 meters from the first one, [resulting in the deaths of 39 civilians, including four children \(one male and three females\) and seven women](#). Among the victims was the Civil Defense personnel member who was engaged in inspecting the site of the first strike. We issued [a report](#) highlighting this massacre.



Map showing the location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019

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Location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019



- 1 Location of the first Russian attack
- 2 Location of the second Russian attack which resulted in a massacre
- 3 Location of the third Russian attack
- 4 Location of the fourth Russian attack
- 1 Location of the first Syrian attack
- 2 Location of the second Syrian attack

The SNHR spoke with Obada Zekra, the Director of the Civil Defense Center in Ma'aret al Numan city, who went to the site of the massacre to recover the victims and injured. He told us: **“The air observatories and the Civil Defense observation service provided general information that morning that a Russian warplane has arrived in the airspace of Ma'aret al Numan city after taking off from Hmeimim Airbase. Less than a minute later, a violent explosion shook the center of the city. One of the Civil Defense teams headed to the site. The attack took place at the end of the street leading to the vegetable market near a motorcycle repair shop.”**



Obada added that another air raid, also carried out by a Russian warplane, occurred minutes after the first attack, with the missile exploding 10 meters away from him, causing the largest number of casualties: “ **The majority of the victims of the second attack were civilians who rushed to the site to take part in recovering those injured in the first attack, and one of the Civil Defense members was martyred. We retrieved the bodies of martyrs and the wounded and took them to the medical centers. We also recovered the remains of a person that we could not identify.** “ Obada added that the Russian warplane then carried out other air raids in the east of the city, after which Syrian warplanes bombarded the city. He confirmed that the targeted areas were free of any military presence of factions of the Armed Opposition or Hay’at Tahrir al Sham.

On Monday, July 29, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at al Latamena town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, which resulted in the deaths of five civilians from one family, including one child and three women. Al Latamena town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, August 16, 2019, at around 19:20, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, took off from Hmeimim Airbase in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, before firing a number of missiles on al Rahma IDPs residential village in east of [Hass](#) village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of [14 civilians](#), all IDPs from the northern suburbs of Hama, including [seven children](#) ([three males](#), [three females](#) and one unborn baby), and three women, and leaving around 20 others injured, in addition to causing extensive destruction to residential buildings housing IDPs. 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.





Victims of a massacre committed by forces we believe were Russian in al Rahma IDPs residential village near Hass village, Idlib - August 16, 2019

The SNHR contacted the media activist Fadi Yasin, from Kfarrouma village, who was approximately 1 km away from the site of the bombardment at the time of the incident. He said: **“Air observatories circulated reports via walkie talkies about Russian warplanes taking off from Hmeimim Airbase in Latakia suburbs and heading towards us. A few minutes later, the warplanes carried out raids. I saw from the distance the missiles falling on al Rahma residential village near Hass village, which is a village sheltering the displaced people from Hama suburbs. I rushed to the site, where I saw the remains of victims scattered among the buildings. The place was badly destroyed and fires broke out. I helped the Civil Defense members and the families who preceded me to the scene to recover the disemboweled body of a woman whose fetus had come out of her stomach, and we took her to Ma’aret al Numan Hospital in the hope of saving the fetus, but it died.”**

Fadi told us that about 12 victims and dozens of wounded had arrived at Ma’aret al Numan Hospital, and the situation was very difficult.



B. Most notable victims among medical and Civil Defense personnel who were killed at the hands of Russian forces in the fourth year of Russia's intervention:

- Medical personnel

Abdul Basit Mubrak, Suleiman al Yaqoub and Mustafa al Hasan, three of the Kafr Zita Emergency System personnel working with the 'Free' Hama Health Directorate, from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, were killed on Saturday, July 27, 2019, when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles that landed near an ambulance they were driving on the road between Kafr Zita city and al Latamena town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, as they were heading to aid those wounded in earlier bombing of the area by Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

[Abdul Basit Mubrak](#), [an ambulance driver](#), was born in 1985.

[Suleiman al Yaqoub](#), a paramedic and ambulance driver, was born in 1987.

[Mustafa al Hasan](#), [a paramedic](#), was born in 1987.



Abdul Basit Mubrak, Suleiman al Yaqoub and Mustafa al Hasan

- Civil Defense personnel

Mahmoud Emad Abdul Aal, a media worker for Mhambel Civil Defense Center, from Mhambel village in Idlib governorate western suburbs, was born in 1990. He had a high school certificate, and was married with four kids. He [was killed](#) on Saturday, March 9, 2019, as a result of missile [bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes](#), which we believe were Russian, on al Mentar village, which is administratively a part of Jisr al Shoghour city in Idlib governorate's western suburbs, while he was checking the site of earlier bombardment of the village by the same warplanes with his Civil Defense team colleagues.



Mahmoud Abdul Aal



SNHR contacted Mahmoud's friend, Hassan al Ali, a media worker, who told us what he had been told by one of the members of the team who witnessed the incident in which Mahmoud was fatally injured. He told us: **“At around 4.30 pm, Russian warplanes launched several raids on al Mentar village in Idlib governorate western suburbs, and while Mahmoud was documenting the bombing, a missile landed near him, causing serious injury to his stomach. He was immediately taken to Jisr al Shoghour Hospital, but unfortunately he died a short time after his arrival.”** Hassan added, **“The bombing of the village that day also resulted in the deaths of two women, and injured six civilians, including two children and two members of the Civil Defense.”**

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) mourned Mahmoud on its official Twitter account.

Zuheir al Rajo, from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, the head of the human resources department of the Civil Defense directorate's northern sector in Hama governorate, was killed along with a number of his family members when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at Kafr Zita city on Monday, July 29, 2019.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) mourned Zuheir on its official Twitter account.



Zuheir al Rajo

C. Most notable victims among media workers who were killed at the hands of Russian forces in the fourth year of Russia's intervention:

On Sunday, July 21, 2019, [media activist Anas Abdul Majid al Dyab](#) died of wounds caused by [multiple shrapnel injuries](#) to most of [his body](#) as [a result of bombardment](#) by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, when they fired missiles at al Gharbi al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was accompanying Civil Defense personnel inspecting a site in the neighborhood previously bombed by the same warplanes.

Anas, a photographer for the Khan Sheikhoun Center of Civil Defense, from Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1997. Anas, who was single and held a secondary school certificate, had been injured several times before; one of these injuries was sustained in the chemical attack carried out by the Syrian regime on al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city on April 4, 2017.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) published an obituary and tribute to Anas on their official account on Twitter.



The SNHR contacted media worker Ayham al Bayyoush, a friend of Anas, who told us what another of Anas' colleagues, who was accompanying him when he was fatally injured, had said about the events of that day: **“On Sunday, July 21, Russian warplanes launched several raids on al Gharbi al Shamali neighborhood of Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. While Anas was with his team at one of the sites that was bombed, inspecting the place and documenting what happened, a missile fired by the same warplanes fell near him. Shrapnel hit several places in Anas' body, and he was immediately taken to Bab al Hawa Hospital near the Syrian-Turkish borders, but unfortunately he died before he arrived at the hospital.”** Ayham added that two other Civil Defense members were also injured in the same bombardment.



The funeral of media activist Anas al Dyab, who died in a Russian air attack on Khan Sheikhoun city, Idlib - July 21, 2019

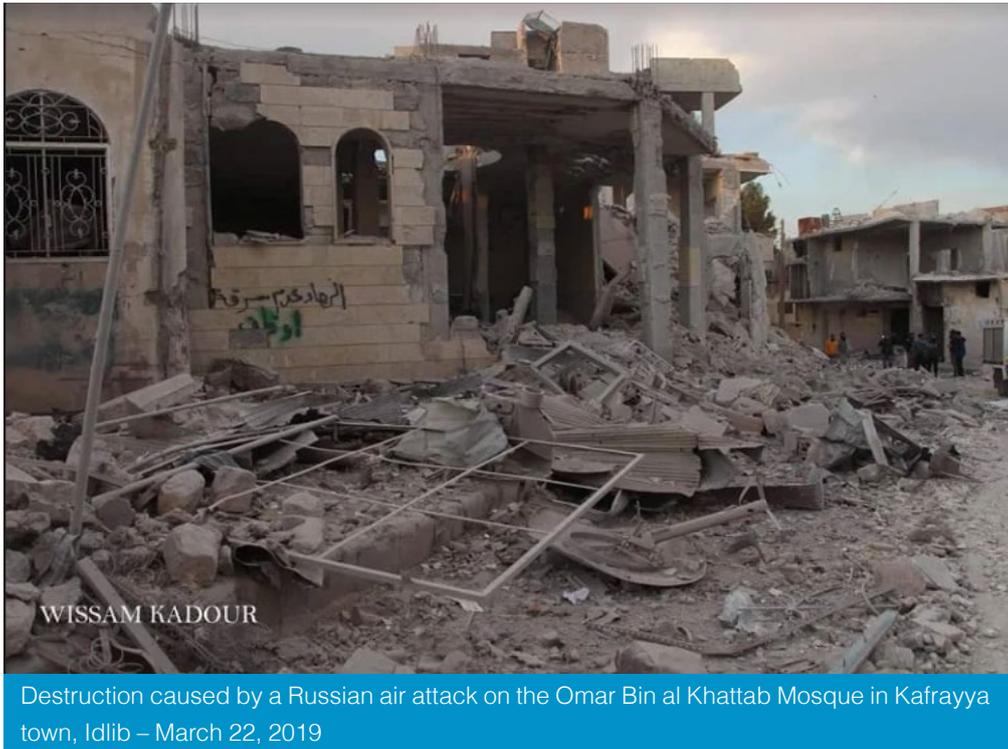
D. Most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities at the hands of Russian forces in the fourth year of Russia's intervention:

- Places of worship

- Mosques:

On Friday, March 22, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the Omar Bin al Khattab Mosque in Kafrayya town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, causing significant destruction to the building and furniture, putting it out of service. We note that the mosque was formerly a Hussainiya (Shiite center) before it was made into a mosque. The town was under the joint control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and Turkistan Islamic Party at the time of the incident.





Destruction caused by a Russian air attack on the Omar Bin al Khattab Mosque in Kafrayya town, Idlib – March 22, 2019

On Tuesday, August 13, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at the [Izz al Din al Sayyad Mosque](#) in Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, inflicting severe destruction on the mosque building, as well as causing significant material damage to its furniture, putting it out of service. Khan Sheikhoun city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

- Vital educational facilities

- Schools

On Tuesday, April 30, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at [al Qassabiya Primary School](#) in al Qassabiya village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate during school hours, [causing severe destruction](#) to the southern part of [the school](#), as well as causing significant material damage to its furniture. The 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 Monday, August 26, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the Ihsem Middle School for Girls in Ihsem town in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [causing severe](#) destruction to [the school building](#), and [causing significant material](#) damage to [its furniture](#). Ihsem town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



- Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities:

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, carried out four attacks directly targeted [Kafranbel Surgical Hospital](#)- part of which is fortified inside caves that were dug underground under the building of the main hospital, in the north of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the death of a civilian who was reviewing the hospital, as well as causing significant destruction to the hospital building, causing moderate material damage to the hospital's equipment, and inflicting massive destruction on [an ambulance](#) belonging to the [Sham ambulance system](#) that was parked in front of the hospital. We note that the hospital was subjected to further attacks by the same forces on the following two days, despite being out of service, followed by an attack by fixed-wing Syrian Regime forces warplanes on May 10. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incidents.



Destruction inflicted on the Kafranbel Surgical Hospital by a Russian air attack on Kafranbel city, Idlib – May 5, 2019

On Wednesday, August 21, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles that landed near al Rahma Surgical Hospital, established in a fortified location to the east of Talmennes town in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles fell 50 meters from the hospital. A few minutes later, the same warplanes returned and repeated their bombardment, using a missile that hit the hospital building directly, [resulting in casualties, in addition to causing significant destruction to the hospital's building](#), and inflicting [severe material damage](#) to the hospital's equipment. Talmennes town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction caused by a Russian air on al Rahma Surgical Hospital in Talmennes town, Idlib – August 21, 2019

- Infrastructures

- Water facilities and related sources:

On Sunday, July 14, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a number of raids on Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [one of which](#) used [two RBK bombs](#) loaded with AO-2.5RTM / AO-2.5RT cluster munitions. The cluster submunitions fell on the water station of al Zarqaa tank on the western outskirts of the city, [partly destroying the station](#) facility, and [causing moderate material damage to its equipment](#), putting it out of service, in addition to injuring four of the site's guards. 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.





Remnants of an RBK-500 cluster incubator used in an air attack by Russian forces on the water station of al Zarqaa tank in Ma'aret al Numan city, Idlib - July 14, 2019

We note that the water station facility contains pumping stations in addition to a catchment ground reservoir, with a capacity of 5,000 cubic meters, that provides drinking water for about 120,000 people in the area, and that it was the only one still in operation in the area after the Bsida station was put out of service by a Syrian air strike that targeted it on July 5. UNICEF issued [a statement](#) on July 20 calling on all parties to stop attacks on water facilities.

- Bakeries

On Sunday, January 20, 2019, at around 3:00, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired two missiles [at al Taqwa automatic bakery](#) in the north of [al Janoudiya](#) village, which is administratively a part of Jisr al Shughour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, which caused massive destruction to the bakery building, in addition to inflicting severe material damage on its equipment. The village was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction of al Taqwa automatic bakery in al Janoudiya village, Idlib, inflicted by a Russian airstrike – January 20, 2019

E. Most notable cluster munitions attacks:

On Friday, May 3, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired an RBK missile loaded with AO-2.5RTM / AO-2.5RT [cluster munitions](#), targeting residential neighborhoods in al Jamasa village in Hama western suburbs. The explosion of the munitions resulted in material damage to the property. 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.





Remnants of AO-2.5RTM / AO-2.5RT cluster munitions used in an air attack by Russian forces on al Jamasa village, Hama – May 3, 2019

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

Legal conclusions

1. The Russian regime is unarguably implicated in supporting the Syrian regime, which has committed crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, by providing it with weapons and military expertise and with giving it immunity from accountability through use of the UN veto, as well as through direct military intervention alongside it. The support of a regime implicated in crimes against humanity constitutes a clear violation of international law and makes the Russian regime vulnerable to accountability.
2. The Russian regime has unquestionably violated the UN Security Council Resolutions No. 2139 and 2254 ordering the cessation of indiscriminate attacks, as well as violating Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute by committing intentional homicide, all of which constitute crimes against humanity.
3. We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted unarmed civilians. Therefore, Russian forces have violated the rules of customary international human rights law, which protect the right to life. In addition, the bombardment has been carried out in a non-international armed conflict, which constitutes a war crime as all criteria have been fulfilled.
4. The attacks included in this report, which were carried out by the Russian regime, constitute a violation of customary international humanitarian law as shells were directed at populated residential areas rather than a specific military object.



5. Incidents of bombardment have inadvertently caused losses of civilian lives, injuries, and severe damage to civilian objects, and there are strong indications that lead us to believe the damage is disproportionately extreme compared to any military objectives for the attacks.

Recommendations

Security Council

- The Security Council should take additional steps after Resolution 2254 was adopted, which demands, “...Immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment.”
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those implicated should be held accountable, including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- Establish security and peace in Syria and implement the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ norm in order to preserve Syrians’ lives, heritage, and cultural artefacts from being destroyed, looted, and tainted.
- Expand sanctions to include the Syrian, Russian, and Iranian regimes which have been directly involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.

International community

- In light of the Security Council’s division and utter inability, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people. This would be demonstrated by protecting the Syrian people from the daily killing and lifting the siege, as well as increasing support with respect to relief efforts. Additionally, steps should be taken in order to exercise universal jurisdiction in regard to these crimes before national tribunals as part of fair trials for all those who were involved.
- In light of the continued Russian veto, despite the Syrian regime continuing to commit crimes against humanity and war crimes, it is imperative to form an international civilized coalition outside the Security Council to protect civilians in Syria from Russian and Syrian regime attacks.
- Expand politically economic and economic sanctions against the Russian regime for committing war crimes in Syria, for continuing to violate sanctions imposed against the Syrian regime, and for assisting it in breaching UN Security Council resolutions, including on non-recurrence of using chemical weapons and barrel bombs.



- SNHR has repeatedly called, as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P)' norm in dozens of studies and reports after all the political initiatives, through the Arab League agreement and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan and the Cessation of Hostilities and Astana agreements that followed, proved to be useless. As such, action should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the 'Responsibility to Protect' norm, which was established by the UN General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work towards achieving justice and accountability in Syria through the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and use the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- In the reports issued by the Commission of Inquiry from 2017 until the last report, we note that no responsibility was clearly assigned to the Russian forces for incidents and violations it committed, except for only two incidents. The International Commission of Inquiry should identify criminals as clearly as it did in its initial reports.

OHCHR

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other UN organs on the incidents included in this report, since these were carried out by forces we believe were Russian in coordination with government forces.
- Clearly name perpetrators of violations, especially Russian forces, after they bombed dozens of medical facilities and Civil Defense centers, and don't be fearful of exposing such practices.

UN special envoy to Syria

- Expand Security Council briefings rather than limiting these to violations by al Nusra Front and ISIS.
- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres and those who were primarily responsible for dooming de-escalation agreements.



Russian regime:

- Stop supporting the current Syrian regime and apologize to the Syrian people for all violations committed by Russian forces.
- Supporting a genuine political transition away from the dynastic dictatorship of one family and its brutal security services is the only way to achieve security, stability and reconstruction.
- Launch an investigation into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of those investigation public to the Syrian people, and hold those who were involved accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rehabilitate them, and achieve reparations for all the families of the wounded and the victims who were killed by the present Russian regime.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary humanitarian law.

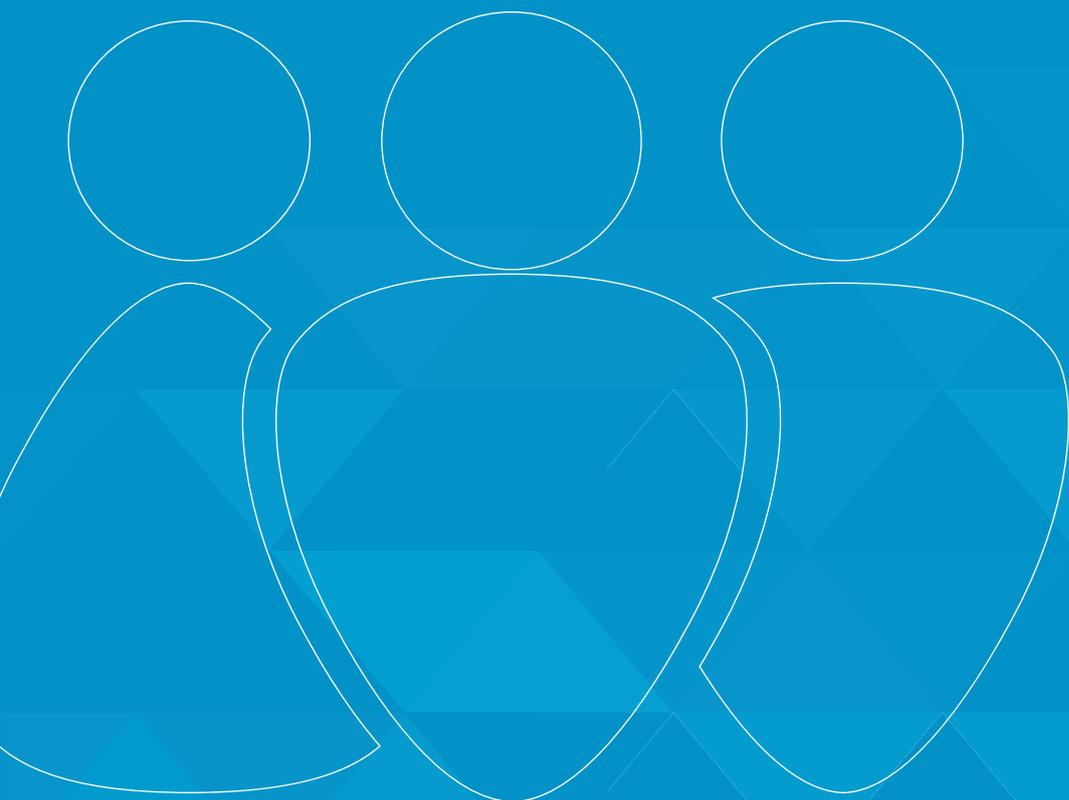
European States and the European Union

- Impose economic sanctions on Russia in light of the war crimes it perpetrated in Syria.
- Support recently displaced victims in northwestern Syria, mainly through providing drinking and usable water, with more than 1.6 million Syrians currently in urgent need of assistance after Russian and Syrian Regime forces launched violent attacks on these areas since April 2019 to date.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and those who were affected that we got to know and document their names. We would also like to sincerely thank the residents, local activists, and victims' families whose contribution made our database and this report possible.





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