



Russian forces kill civilians on the third day of Eid Al Fitr Death on Orontes river banks

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I. Introduction:

Darkosh town is related to Jisr Al Shoghour in Idlib governorate and located about 27 km away from Jisr Al Shoghour town that is under the control of armed opposition factions.

In this report we document a massacre in Darkosh town on the third day of Eid Al Fitr by suspected Russian forces. SNHR contacted families of the city, eyewitnesses, survivors and local media activists where we include three accounts. Additionally, we verified pictures and videos we received. We have explained the purpose of these interviews for the eyewitnesses and they gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report.

The investigations included in this report proved that the targeted areas were civilian areas and they are free of any military centers or weapons stores related to armed opposition factions and extremist Islamic organizations during or before the attack.

This report includes the bare minimum of magnitude of the violation that we were able to document and it doesn't include the social, economic and psychological dimensions.

II. Details:

Friday 8 July 2016 about 10:30 am, missiles of suspected Russian warships targeted Darkosh town in the suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missile exploded in the sky and its shrapnel fell near civilian gathering on the banks of Orontes





River in the town while the missile fell on the residential house on the opposite bank resulted in the death of some of its residences.

We documented the death of 27 civilians including two children and 11 women. Additionally, 13 houses were destroyed almost completely and the injury of about 53 individuals including three civil defense elements.

SNHR contacted Mr. Qutayba Abu Hamza via Facebook. He is a media activist at the organization of civil defense, he headed to the place of bombardment and told us his testimony:

“The observatory of Free Army generalized that a missile from the sea has been launched toward our town. Then, we heard sound of two explosions. We arrived to the place where there were more 11 victims all of them are out of the town and they came to walk near the bank of Orontes River. An eyewitness told me that the missiles exploded in the sky and its shrapnel fell on the bank of the river while the missile fell on a residential house located on the opposite bank which resulted in deaths but the great number of victims was due to the explosion of the shrapnel On that day, the death toll was 22 individuals, and we pulled out one victim from the river who was swimming on it before the falling of the shrapnel. He was called Rami”

Mr. Hassan Qoraish, a local media activist and a relative of an injured person of the bombardment, we contacted him via Facebook and he told us his testimony:

“I heard a rumbling which followed by an explosion. I could not specify the place but I headed to the hospital and aided a wounded on the road. The hospital was full of injured persons and victims among them there was my nephew, he is 8-year-old child and his leg was injured due to a shrapnel. I counted 45 injured persons on that day including women and children in addition to 22 martyrs most of them are from Jericho and Ma’aret Al Numan who were walking near the bank of Ornates river where the missiles fell”

Mr. Ahmad Ghanim, an injured person, SNHR contacted him via Facebook and he told us the details of his injury:

“About 10:30 am, I was at my house when I heard the explosion sound then I saw a body fell like fire block, the dust was everywhere. The walls were cracked and the windows were damaged. I heard ringing in my ears and shrapnel hit my hand. I got out of my house and saw my neighbor’s house as it leveled completely.





I started to aid the injured and I pulled out a girl and an elderly woman who were alive in addition to a youth whose leg was cut and then he died. My injury was not that danger but many other injured persons were in serious situation whose their fault was walking”

III. Attachments:

[Video footage](#) showing the evacuation of victims due to a ballistic missile fired from suspected [Russian warships](#) on Darkosh town, 8 July 2016

[Video footage](#) showing the destruction aftermaths due to a ballistic missile fired from [suspected Russian](#) warships on Darkosh town, 8 July 2016

[Video footage](#) showing the injured due to a ballistic missile fired from suspected Russian warships on Darkosh town, 8 July 2016

[Pictures](#) of missile remnants fired by [Russian warships](#) stationed on the Syrian coast in the Mediterranean Sea on Darkosh town in Idlib, 8 July 2016

[Pictures of victims](#) due to a missile fired by [Russian warships](#) stationed in the Mediterranean [sea on Darkosh](#) town in Idlib, 8 July 2016

Victims' names.





I. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

1- The Russian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, the Russian regime violated Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.

2- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted armless civilians. Therefore, the Russian forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which amount to a war crime where all elements were fulfilled.

3- The attacks mentioned in this report, which have been perpetrated by the Russian regime, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area rather than a specific military object.

4- The aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, and significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Recommendations

To Russian regime:

- To investigate the incidents included in this report, inform Syrian people about the results and hold the perpetrators accountable.
- To compensate the affected hospitals, rebuild them and provide it with equipment. It also has to compensate the victims and the injured
- To cease the bombardment of hospitals, protected facilities and civilian areas and to respect humanitarian customary law.

To the Security Council

- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been involved.
- To instill security and peace in Syria and implement the norm of the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect the lives, culture, and history of the Syrian people from being thieved and ruined.





- To expand the sanctions to include the Russian and Iranian regime who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.

To the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Office must submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on this massacre specifically considering that it was perpetrated by forces which we believe that they are Russian.

To the International Community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, Steps must be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect it from the daily killings and siege and increase the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction must be activated in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in tens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were drought out. Therefore, steps under Article 7 of the Rome Statute must be taken and the norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, must be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- To renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- To work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights council and work on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

Acknowledgment

Our thanks and condolences for the families and local activists who enriched this report majorly.

