



Russian Forces Breach UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and Kills Idlib Residents The Death of 42 civilians, including a child and two women at the hands of Russian Forces in Idlib

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I. Introduction:

Since 28 March 2015, Idlib has been under the control of Al Fateh Army (a joined force between armed opposition and Al Nusra Front). On 24 September 2015, a truce was conducted by Ahrar Al Sham, one of the armed opposition groups in the Al Fateh Army and the Syrian regime. It included the cease of all military operations and aerial shelling on the Idlib city and some of its towns in exchange for letting food enter the Al Fou'aa and Kefraya towns, which are supporters to the Syrian regime. However, that government shelling, which led to the displacement of thousands of its residents, did not stop. Nonetheless, we documented an alleged Russian shelling on regions that were subjected to the truce terms twice since the beginning of the Russian airstrike on 30 September 2015. The first breach in the truce's terms was on 28 September 2015 on Binnish city, which was documented in "They Came to Kill Us" report.

SNHR issued a previous [report](#) that documented the crimes and massacres that were committed by government forces after they withdrew from the city.

Our team conducted interviews and investigations with residents, local activists and eyewitnesses; in addition we included three of the interviews in this report. We analyzed footages and images we received and crossed referenced these outcomes with information about the air strikes from pro-Russian media outlets. All eyewitnesses spoke in Arabic as we also explained the aim behind conducting these interviews where some of





them preferred their real names to be kept confidential, as we also kept a record for all the contact details to all eyewitnesses.

All our investigations proved that the targeted areas were densely vital and populated areas that were free of any armed opposition presence during or even before the attack.

What is documented below constitutes the bare minimum of what we were able to record, as it also does not tackle the social, economical and psychological dimensions of this crisis.

Fadel Abdul Ghani, SNHR chairman, says:

“Even though the consensual Security Council resolution was issued on 18 January 2015, but neither the Syrian nor Russia regimes have abided by it. Just like the Syrian regime which agrees to Security Council resolutions then breaches it later on, Russia has followed its footsteps even though it is one of the countries who voted for this resolution. Random bombardment continued not only by the Syrian regime, but the Russian was well; thus breaching all UN Security Council resolutions.”

Russian authorities deny all these accusations and state that all its targets were on military locations that belonged for ISIL or terrorist groups. Therefore, SNHR demands the Russian authorities to investigate this shelling incident and the prior ones and we are ready to present all required evidence and information.

II. Incident's Details:

On 20 December 2015, three alleged Russian warplanes launched 6 airstrikes with 8 rockets on vital regions in the middle of Idlib city. The estimated region's area is 1 Km².

- Four rockets fell on a region called “the security region” in Al Qusour neighborhood in Idlib. It included several government buildings like the military and air force security branches, the governor's palace and Al Ba'ath Party building that was transformed by the armed opposition to a court and a prison that included 200 individuals who were accused of different charges.
- Two rockets targeted Al Jalaa' nearby street which includes the city's main market, a warehouse for school books, and a high school.
- Two rockets targeted a residential building behind Al Hayat Mosque.
- SNHR team was able to document the death of 42 civilians, including a child and two women, and one armed man. Also more than 122 individuals were injured.





Mr. Omar Abu Abdullah, a civil activist witnessed the shelling and gave SNHR his testimony:

“I was with the rest of the group of Idlib’s Youth Gathering, our civil group, and we were organizing the traffic when at about 10 a.m., three Russian warplanes launched an air strike on Al Jalaa’Street next to Al Ourouba Female High School. I went to the shelling location and before I got there, the Russian warplanes launched another airstrike on the court’s building that was previously the headquarters for the ruling regime party.

I was next to the high school and the civil defense members were trying to evacuate the injured people and transport the dead bodies. I saw great destruction in the school’s books warehouse building since it was near the high school. However, the massacre happened next to court’s building. I went there and saw the place completely destroyed. The smell of charcoaled bodies was all over the place and I heard distress sounds from the court’s basement where the court’s prison was.

The warplanes launched 8 rockets on a region that is not more than 1 Km2. The shelling targeted vital buildings, court, the book warehouse and the air force security branch, a four story building, behind Al Hayat Mosque. Thus the destruction was great.”

Mr. Mohamad Yehya, one of the civil defense members in Idlib city went to the shelling location and gave SNHR his testimony:

“I went with my teammates from the civil defense to the “security region” after the violent shelling from the Russian warplanes. The greatest number of victims was in the court which was almost completely destroyed. It took us two days to pull the victims’ bodies from under the rubble. During our rescue mission, the Russian warplanes launched another air strike on us and shelled Al Sheikh Tholoth region.

There was a 17 years old young man who was trapped under the rubble. It took us 5 hours to reach him and pull him. The region that was targeted is purely central and vital as people go to the court to facilitate their paper work. There are no military headquarters near that area that would justify the brutal shelling.”





Mr. Sa'er, a local media activist in Idlib, who was close to the shelling location, gave SNHR his testimony:

"I was in the media office when the airstrike began. The FSA observatories announced that a squadron of Russian warplanes was roaming around in our sky. The shelling started at about 10 a.m. where two rockets fell on the city's downtown next to the former air force security branch which killed a civilian and injured 5 others. I went directly to the shelling location and started to take pictures of the shelled site. The shelling was repeated in close locations with 7 more rockets. It hit the military security branch, the court and the school books' warehouse. The court's building was targeted twice and it witnessed the death of dozens of people. It was a three story building and it facilitated the resident's paper work and documents like marriage, divorce, civil conflicts... etc. Dozens of individuals go there daily in addition to the judges. There was a basement in the court's building which included almost 200 prisoners. The initial outcome was 20 martyrs, 15 missing individuals and not less than 110 injured individuals. It was horrific. Dead bodies were scattered around the place and hundreds others were calling for help from under the rubble. The court's building belonged to Al Fateh Army but judges, lawyers, employees and court security forces worked in it and there were no military headquarters next to it."

III- Legal Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Conclusions:

1. Russian forces violated UN Security Council resolution 2139 through its indiscriminate and deliberate shelling.
2. Russian forces should abide by the International Humanitarian Law, and therefore responsible for these violations since the beginning of the attacks, which were mentioned through this report. Russia must bear the consequences of all these violations, and avoid its recurrence.
3. Indiscriminate bombardment is considered a clear violation of the International Humanitarian Law, and these indiscriminate killings amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.
4. It is necessary to protect civilians from the brutality of the Syrian regime and extremist militias allied with them. A no-fly zone must be established in parallel with the protecting civilians in Syria from the brutality of ISIL.





- Recommendations:

To the UN Security Council:

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

To the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

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

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

To the international community:

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





VI. Attachments:

a. Victims' details:



List of victims who died in the alleged Russian shelling on Idlib city on
20 December 2015

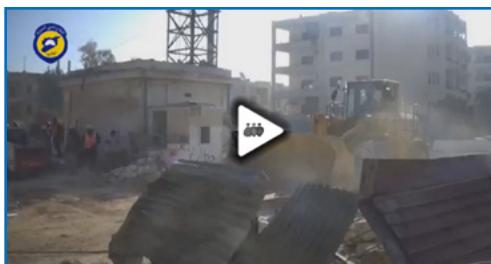
1. Abu Huthafa Al Homsi / from Homs
2. Samir Swaid Abu Waseem
3. Zakiya Kurdi
4. Majid Ma'addi
5. Fadi Kurdi
6. Lawyer Yasser Ahmad Al Shabakh
7. Yahya Al Mohammad / from Idlib - Saraqib city
8. Lawyer Omar Fahel
9. Haj Mohammad Yasser Kurzi
10. Muhi Al Din Bin GhathMashah
11. Burhan Dubaa
12. Lawyer FakherAssel / from Idlib - Itsem town
13. Muder Abdul Hajjed Etz and her daughter
14. Omar Haj Qasem / from Idlib - Darkoush
15. Mustafa Sarimo / from Idlib - Darkoush
16. Abdul Qader Haj Qasem / from Idlib - Darkoush
17. Khaled Abdallah Al Esa / from Idlib - KafSayneh

b. Images and video footages that depict the shelling incident, victims and injured people:

1. A video that depicts pulling an injured individual from under the rubble by the civil defense members:



2. A video that depicts civil defense members who were pulling victims' bodies from under the rubble after 24 hours from the shelling:



3. A [video](#) that depicts the victims due to the Russian shelling on Idlib city.





3. Images that depict the shelling aftermath:



Acknowledgment

Our heartfelt thanks and appreciations go to the victims' families, eyewitnesses, and local activists whose testimonies contributed majorly to this report. Our most profound consolations go out to the victims' families and friends.

