



Documentation of a massacre in Jasem city as a result of bombardment with barrel bombs

Introduction:

Jasem city, in the north-west of Daraa governorate, has a population of 70,000 people, and is considered to have a strategically important geographical location
Link showing Jasem's location on the map:



On Thursday, 19-12-2013, at around 3:00 pm, Syrian government helicopters targeted the square of Jasem town with two barrel bombs, resulting in the deaths of at least 25 people. The recovery of the victims' bodies took three days as a result of the massive destruction caused by the bombing.

Report's Methodology:

The methodology of this report is based on the investigations conducted by the Syrian Network for Human Rights team in Daraa governorate in coordination with a number of families and activists, with the report containing the accounts of two eyewitnesses identified in the report, as well as news reports and pictures received by the network by activists contributing to it from inside the city.





Details:

This is the account of the first eyewitness, named Abo al Hareth, who can be contacted via his Skype account (islamvector):

“I was about 1.5 kilometers away when I heard a very powerful explosion from the public square in the center of Jasem. I went to the scene of the explosion. The warplanes had bombed the area using two barrel bombs targeting the population. The destruction was very large. Some buildings were razed to the ground. The number of houses that were completely destroyed was five and four others were partially destroyed, while fire broke out in one house. We tried to extinguish the fire to no avail until an ordinary water tanker not designated for firefighting was summoned because the fire station is located in an area besieged by the regime.”

This is the account of the second witness, named Abo Yaser, who can be contacted via his Skype account (mar.mosa022):

“The barrel bombs came down suddenly on us ... They fell on a very crowded place. There were people under the rubble, and we started to help retrieve the bodies. The thing that hurt me most was when we devoted one bag to collecting the [dismembered] remains of children and other people under the rubble.

There was a father who called out the names of his four children, while he was trying to search for them under the rubble of the house. The martyrs were dozens and body parts were everywhere.”

Record of victims:

The Syrian Network team documented the deaths of at least [30 people](#), including 16 children and six women, in a three-day period during the removal of the bodies from under the rubble.

Evidence and attachments:

[Link contains](#) a set of pictures and videos that have been scrutinized and evaluated, showing the impact and results of the bombing and showing some of the victims of the massacre who were either injured or killed.





Conclusions:

1. The Syrian Network for Human Rights confirms that the bombardment of Jasem city was indiscriminate and was directed against unarmed civilians, showing that the government forces and shabiha violated the provisions of international human rights law which protects the right to life. In addition, this crime was committed in the context of non-international armed conflict, meaning that it amounts to a war crime in which all the relevant criteria are present.
2. The Syrian Network for Human Rights also believes that what happened in Jasem city represented by murder is a crime against humanity, because this is not the first such incident, but one of many such atrocities that have become near-daily events targeting various Syrian governorates, which are systematic and widespread.
3. Indiscriminate attacks carried out by government forces are in violation of customary international humanitarian law; that is, government forces have fired shells into populated areas and have not directed them at a specific military target.
4. Such attacks, in particular the bombings, have incidentally caused losses to civilian lives or injuries or damage to civilian objects. There are very strong indications that the damage was exceptionally excessive compared to the desired military advantage.
5. The scale of the massacre, the nature of such repeated massacres, the excessive level of force used therein, the indiscriminate character of the bombing and the coordinated nature of these attacks means that they can only be carried out under the supreme directives which is to say that they are state policy.

Recommendations:

United Nations and Security Council:

1. Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and stop disrupting the measures that the council is supposed to take against the Syrian government because this sends the wrong message to all dictatorships around the world and fosters a culture of crime.
2. Impose immediate sanctions on all those involved in widespread human rights violations.
3. Ensure that the Syrian government commits itself to allowing all relief and human rights organizations, the International Commission of Inquiry and journalists to enter and not to be restricted in their movements.
4. Ensure that all types of weapons are not supplied to the Syrian government as they are used in large-scale attacks against civilians.





5. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities in maintaining civil peace and security in Syria because violations committed by the Syrian government pose a flagrant threat to international peace and security.
6. Include militias fighting alongside the Syrian government that have committed widespread massacres such as Hezbollah, other Shiite brigades, the National Defense Army, and the Shabiha on the international terrorism list, as well as the organization of the State of Iraq and the Levant, all of which have committed numerous crimes in areas outside the government control.
7. Implement the principle of “Protection of Civilians” adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations to the Syrian situation in 2005. We ask emphatically, if this principle is not applied in Syria, where should it be applied?!
8. Stop treating the Syrian government as a legitimate official party after it committed numerous crimes against humanity in the context of withholding humanitarian relief, amongst other areas, and stop providing it with the largest portion of financial and moral support, which often does not reach the intended beneficiaries, instead being distributed solely to Syrian government loyalists.

Human Rights Council:

1. Demand the Security Council and the relevant international institutions to assume their responsibilities to act against the acts of killing, arrest, rape and displacement committed against the Syrian people.
2. Put pressure on the Syrian government to stop the killings and torture.
3. Hold allies and supporters of the Syrian government - Russia, Iran, and China - materially and ethically responsible for the violations taking place in Syria.
4. The Human Rights Council must give greater attention and seriousness to the disastrous situation of the victims' families in Syria.

The Arab League:

1. Impose comprehensive sanctions on all officials involved in crimes in Syria and urge all countries in the world to do so.
2. Increase humanitarian assistance, especially in education and health levels, and take care of the interests of Syrian refugees in Arab countries.
3. Request that the Security Council implements the above recommendations.
4. Request that the Human Rights Council and the United Nations pay particular attention to the issue of stopping the daily killings and follow up on this matter.





5. Pay close and serious attention to this issue and place it in the center of permanent monitoring and follow-up and try to pay attention and provide care for the families of the victims psychologically, financially and educationally.

6. Put political and diplomatic pressure on the Syrian government's key allies - Russia, Iran and China - to prevent them from continuing to provide international and political cover and protection for all the crimes committed against the Syrian people, and hold them ethically and materially responsible for all abuses by the Syrian government.

The Syrian government:

1. Immediately stop all human rights violations.
2. Respect its international obligations to protect civilians in time of war, respect the rules of international humanitarian law by signing the Rome Statute, and respect international human rights law.
3. Immediately allow access to the International Commission of Inquiry and facilitate its work and cooperate with OHCHR and national human rights organizations.

International Commission of Inquiry:

The International Commission of Inquiry should stop depicting the conflict as if it were between two parties equal in status and in the number, degree and seriousness of crimes and centralized decision, and should describe the crimes as they occurred without mitigating them for political purposes. The committee should also increase the number of its personnel specializing in Syrian affairs due to the scale of crimes committed daily, enabling it to document events more extensively and comprehensively.

