

**Silence is Worse than Crimes against
Humanity and War Crimes**

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I. Brief Definition:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit human rights organization that investigates and documents all violations committed by all parties involved in the Syrian conflict since 2011.

SNHR was founded in June 2011 after an initiative from Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany, who is currently the Chairman of the organization. The network aims to defend the human rights of the Syrian people; it also includes dozens of researchers and human rights activists stationed in Syria and in other neighboring countries.

II. Syrian Governments' Use of Barrel Bombs

By daily observing and recording violations, after the beginning of the popular protests in March 2011, we found out that first significant use of barrel bombs by government forces (Military forces, security forces, local militias, and foreign Shiite militias) was on Monday 1 October, 2012 in Idlib – Silqean town where a helicopter dropped a barrel bomb on a two-floor residential building which collapsed completely and 32 civilians, including seven women and seven children, were killed in addition to 120 others who were injured as shrapnel scattered everywhere.

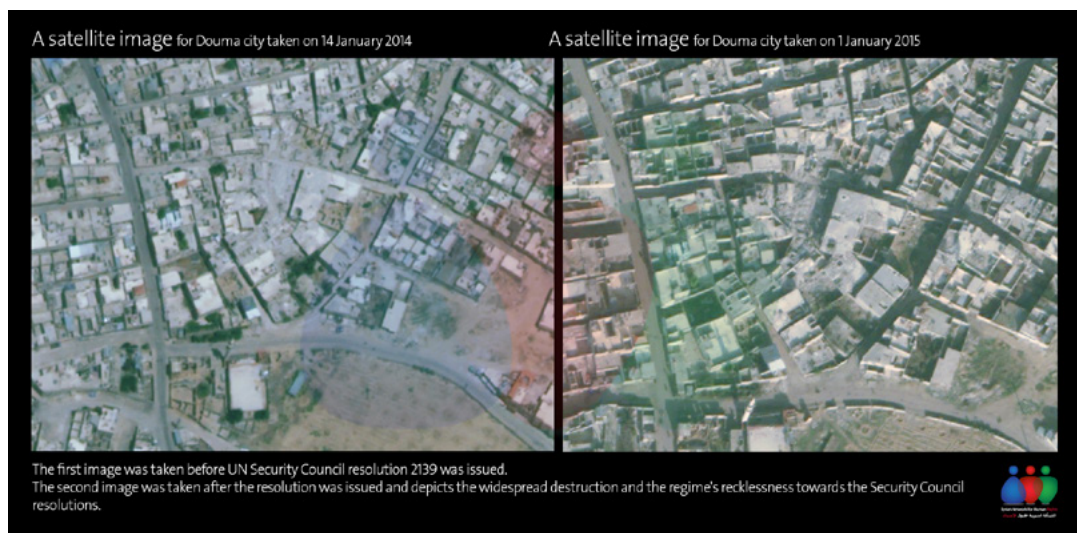
It is worth noting that this might not be the first time barrel bombs were used but it was the first time it was used in such a notable manner. The international community was not familiar with that kind of weapon yet. Barrel bombs sometimes weigh quarter of ton and rely on the free fall principle. These barrels are random weapons and locally made, since it is less expensive, causes massive destruction, and causes a great loss of lives. 99% of the casualties are civilians, where the percentage of targeted women and children ranges between 12 and 35%.

The Security Council waited a year and a half before adopting resolution 2139 on 22 February, 2014 which condemned the use of barrel bombs and mentioned it by name: “Demands that all parties immediately cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs”

However, up to the moment of writing this lecture, the Syrian regime continues to bombard different regions controlled by armed opposition groups with dozens of barrel bombs.

SNHR studies and reports prove that most of the attacks were deliberate and targeted crowded civilian areas. The government's aerial bombardment, displacement and destruction it causes are apparently aimed at thwarting the establishment of any governance model that may serve as a substitute for the Assad government.

On 22 February 2015, SNHR issued a [study](#) about the "Government Forces' Use of Barrel Bombs a Year after Security Council Resolution 2139 was Adopted" and found that the victims' death toll due to the use of barrel bombs before and after the resolution was issued were close.



In this lecture, we will shed light on the outcomes for using barrel bombs and its consequences, as we assure that these records are the bare minimum of what we were able to document due to several challenges and security risks that face our team.



Even though the only conflict party who possesses aviation and military warplanes is the ruling regime; it continues to deny its use, just as it denies other crimes like committing massacres, arrests and torturing detainees. Therefore, in this lecture we will highlight the regime's use of its aviation power since other conflict parties do not possess this kind of weaponry.

The Syrian regime continues to prevent the International Commission of Inquiry, other human rights agencies and independent media outlets from entering Syria.

Since 1 October 2012 and up till 23 September 2015, barrel bombs killed 14351 civilians, including 2822 children and 2621 women.

Syrian Government's Use of Barrel Bombs in August 2015
1591 Barrel Bombs Killed 115 Individuals, including 37 Children and 31 Women

We could not document all destructions caused by barrel bombs, therefore we recorded the number of vital facilities targeted by government aviation, i.e. markets, schools, hospitals and houses of worship.

During August 2015, not less than 16 vital facilities were targeted by barrel bombs:

Medical Centers:

Hospitals and medical regions: 2 were targeted

Residential Neighborhoods:

Markets: 1

Houses of Worship:

Mosques: 8

Infrastructure:

Power Stations: 3

Syrian Government's Use of Barrel Bombs in July 2015
2041 Barrel Bombs Killed 368 Individuals, including 83 Children and 63 Women

We cannot document all destructions caused by barrel bombs, therefore we recorded the number of vital facilities targeted by government aviation.

Barrel bombs targeted not less than 27 vital facilities, detailed as follows:

Houses of worship: 8

Markets: 7

Schools: 5

Medical Facilities: 4

Ambulances: 2

Infrastructure: 2

We conducted several reports in collaboration with the “[Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor](#)”. Our report “Four Years Harvest: The Use of Cluster Ammunition... That is Still Going” discussed the Syrian government’s use of rockets and cluster munitions which killed a great number of civilians as well.

SNHR’s report “[Toxic Gases in Syria: Unlimited Security Council Breaches](#)” discussed the continuous use of toxic gases by the Syrian government after resolution 2118 was issued, where we documented not less than 132 breaches for resolution 2118, including 73 breaches for UN Security Council resolution 2209, and 7 breaches for resolution 2235 where the Security Council demanded the UN Office Disarmament Affair to name the perpetrators.

Also, we issued a report about ISIL’s breaches “[Following the Steps of the Syrian Government: ISIL Violates UN Security Council Resolutions](#)”



Legal Conclusions:

1. Assad regime flagrantly violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139, which calls for stopping of indiscriminate attacks that amount to a crime against humanity under Article VII of the Rome Statute.
2. We emphasize that these aerial attacks have targeted unarmed civilians, which constitutes a violation of the international human rights laws and a war crime under international laws and treaties
3. The aerial attacks contained in the report carried out by the Assad regime are considered as a violation of international humanitarian law as they deliberately targeted populated areas.
4. The scale of the systematic rocket frequent attacks, and the level of excessive force used in it confirms that they were issued with the consent of Assad, who bears full responsibility for these attacks.
5. The magnitude of this wide systematic frequent bombing, the level of its excessive strength, its military nature, and the coordinated approach of these attacks must be based on high orders, and a state policy.
6. Government forces, and all of its leaderships and forms, are responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes as well as any parties that support the Syrian government politically, materially, and militarily – such as the Russian government, the Iranian government, and Hezbollah in addition to the weapon manufacturing companies. All of these parties must be prosecuted for the crimes they perpetrated, or contributed to, against the Syrian people.

Recommendations:

The Security Council

The Security Council should take serious steps in order to implement its resolutions which have become ineffective and thus lost all of its credibility and purpose.

Also, it should impose an arms embargo on the Syrian government and prosecute anyone who supplies the Syrian government with money and weapon considering that those resources are being used to perpetrate crimes and serious human rights violations. The Security Council is the party who has the authority to refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court. Instead of preserving peace and security, the Security Council is hindering this step. Everyone responsible for war crimes and crimes against must be prosecuted.

**BARREL BOMBS
DROPPED TODAY:**

16

THE
SYRIA
CAMPAIGN

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights 24 hours before 1800 local time 7th August 2015.

THE
SYRIA
CAMPAIGN

46

**BARREL BOMBS DROPPED
JUST TODAY**

III. A Partial Solution to the Refugees Crisis:

A Buffer Zone Will Reduce the Refugees' Influx to Europe

The refugee crisis in Syria is an inseparable part from the main issue Syrians have been dealing with; which are the continuous crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been perpetrated by the Syrian regime since March 2011. Months later, different armed groups followed its footsteps but did not amount to 10% of the crimes the Syrian regime committed, according to SNHR archive since March 2011.

A fundamental solution for the Syrian crisis is likely to be excluded to several reasons; such as the current international and regional conflicts, the lack of seriousness and desire from the international community in finding a solution in the near future, and Mr. De Mistura's attempts, which in our opinion were fruitless efforts to buy more time until the Security Council abides all conflicts parties with a solution like past crisis.

All attempts and discussions after Geneva I conference on Syria on 30 June 2012, were counterproductive and gave more time for the Syrian regime to destroy Syria, massacre its own people, and displace them. As a result, desperation grew in Syria and thus they were forced to immigrate, not seek refuge in surrounding countries, where they have been waiting for five years until they can go back to their country. Syrians are left with partial solutions.

The refugee crisis is now forming a real concern for Eastern and Western European countries. We, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, believe that establishing a safe buffer zone that would be safe from the regime's aerial shelling and from ISIL's ground attack, will shelter millions of Syrians and create a local and integrated community. According to dozens of interviews with refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, told us that they are willing to leave the refuge countries and live in the buffer zone as long as it will be protected from the tyranny of the Assad regime and the oppression of ISIL.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights requests the international community and mainly European countries to support the establishment of a buffer zone as soon as possible in parallel with improving the refugees living situation in Syria's neighboring countries, especially education, health, securing employment and granting citizenship.

