

Statement

ISIS Hiding among Civilians Posed a Threat to Their Lives, and the Attacking Party Should Take This into Account

Parties Claiming to Fight
Extremist Organizations Have
Committed Flagrant Human
Rights Violations

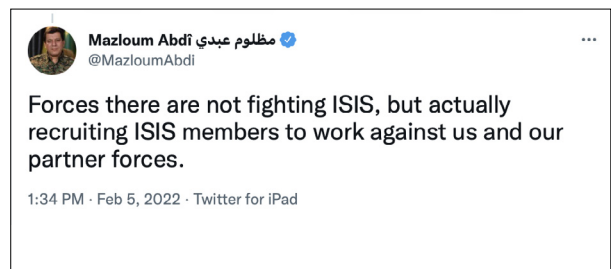
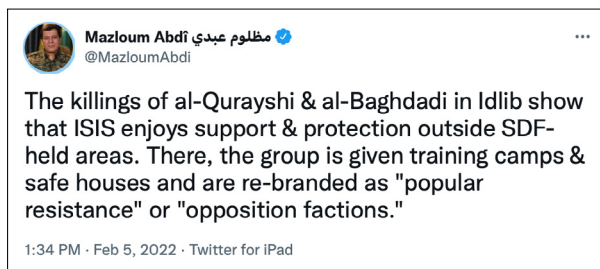


The operation carried out by [the US-led coalition forces on Thursday, February 3, 2022](#), which targeted a residential house consisting of two floors and a basement in the north of Atama village in the northern suburbs of Idlib, demonstrated that leaders and members of ISIS extremist organization might be deployed in many areas, including areas that have never been controlled by the organization, such as Atama village and others. We have documented dozens of occasions on which the organization took civilians as human shields and took cover among them in the areas it controlled. [Raqqa city may be one of the most prominent examples of this](#), with SNHR highlighting the subject previously, revealing that ISIS confiscated many civilians' homes under the pretext of the supposed "blasphemy" of their owners and the "confiscation" of their money, turning these homes into residences for its security and military leaders and living among civilians, most of whom the group referred to as infidels, while at the same time using them as human shields. ISIS has also used its own members' families as human shields, including women and children.

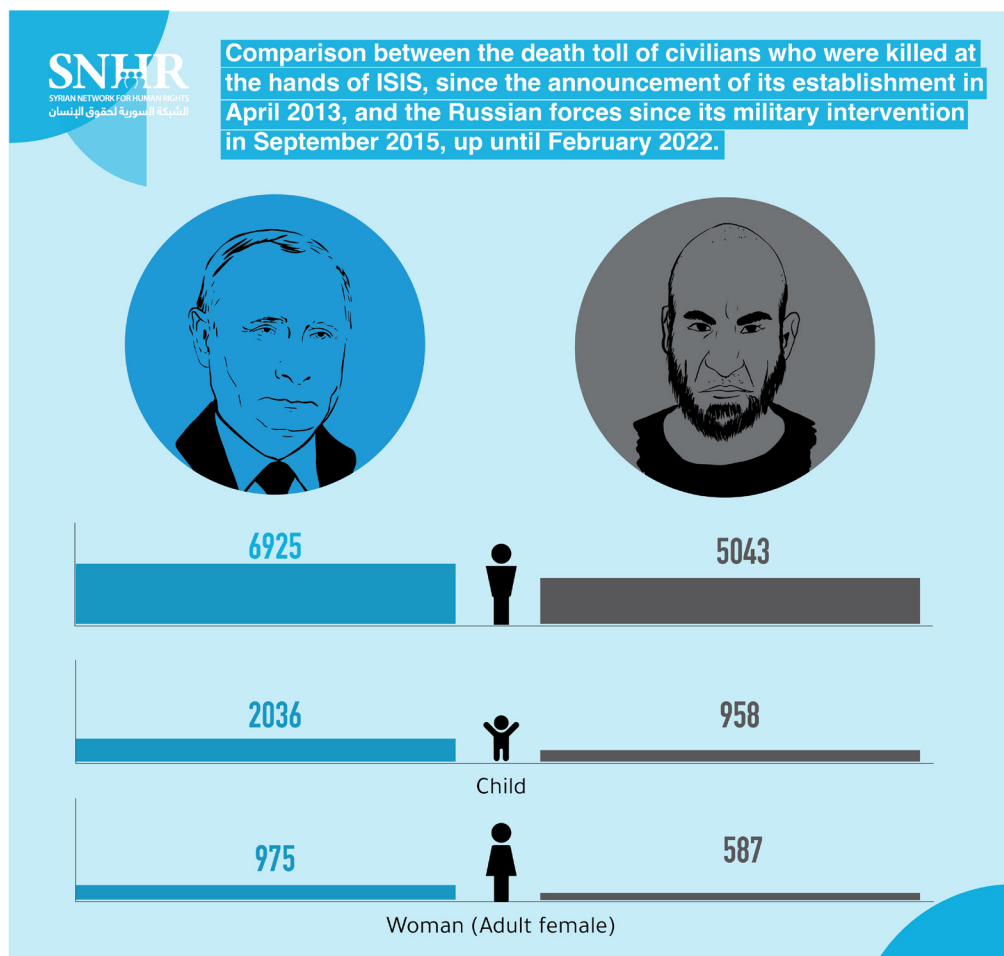
We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) have documented the deaths of at least 3,048 civilians at the hands of the US-led coalition forces, including 925 children, since September 2014 up to the current date (in the last attack on the house where ISIS leader Abdullah Qardash was staying, [we documented civilian casualties, including women and children](#); investigations are still underway to determine how this happened); many of these civilians were killed due to the US-led coalition forces' failure to observe the principle of proportionality in international law, which is based on the attacking party's carefully assessing the context before determining the legality or illegality of the attack. Any attack that will cause losses and damages exceeding the potential military advantage is prohibited,¹ so a balance must always be maintained between the means, the goal, and the action results.

¹ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Rule 14, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule14

ISIS bears the responsibility of residing in civilian neighborhoods, which poses a threat to all these neighborhoods and bearing responsibility for endangering the families of its members. It should also be noted, however, that the Syrian regime, Russia, and Syrian Democratic Forces are all exploiting this situation to stigmatize entire areas as incubators for extremist organizations, in an attempt to give the appearance of being primarily concerned with combating terrorism and using this as justification for the indiscriminate or deliberately targeted bombing of residential areas, bearing in mind that the areas whose populations have been worst affected by extremist organizations have been those areas under the group's control, whose residents have been subject to laws dating back to the most barbaric periods of the dark ages. Recently, we issued two reports on violations by [Hay'at Tahrir al Sham](#) and [ISIS](#) against Syrian society, which highlight this issue.



The War on Terror has long been used as a pretext to commit similar violations by those claiming to be engaged in fighting terrorism. Although Russia based one aspect of its military intervention in Syria on fighting ISIS, its forces have killed more Syrian civilians than ISIS has. The following chart shows the death toll of civilians killed at the hands of ISIS and Russian forces, according to the SNHR's database.



Similarly, the Syrian regime has long stigmatized its opponents with false accusations of terrorism and established a security court to try these cases in 'trials' not worthy of the name. In contrast, Syrian Democratic Forces have justified hundreds of arbitrary arrests, the seizure of homes, and the displacement of their inhabitants under the pretext of belonging to ISIS. The Armed Opposition factions have also failed to respect human rights in the areas under their control. The people began to compare the areas of control in terms of the degree of poor services, freedoms, and security.

The fight against extremist organizations must be based in essence on respect for international law, and attacks against military forces and equipment must consider the principles of international humanitarian law. Human rights violations must not be justified under the pretext of combating terrorism. In addition, the parties fighting terrorist organizations are supposed to be standing in opposition to tyranny, dictatorship, sectarianism, and ethnicity, providing a democratic role model, and ending human rights violations in the areas under their control. All of these factors are among the most important methods of combating extremist organizations.