

Syrian-Russian Alliance's Violations Two Weeks After the American-British-French Military Strike

64 Civilians killed, including
12 Children

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.



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I. Introduction

The Syrian regime carried out [two chemical attacks](#) on Douma city, Damascus suburbs governorate on April 7. The second of those attacks was the bloodiest since Khan Sheik-houn attack last year, as 41 civilians, including 12 children and 14 women, were killed in Douma while about 550 others were injured.

On April 10, the Security Council held an emergency meeting where the US proposed a draft resolution to form an investigation committee on the use of chemical weapons. However, Russia vetoed the resolution, which was the 12th veto Russia has used on Syria since the start of the popular uprising, and the sixth with regard to chemical weapons, despite the fact that Russia has repeatedly denied the occurrence of the attack at times, while accusing the armed opposition of being responsible for it on other occasions.

On Saturday, April 14, 2018, around 04:00, Damascus time, a joint American, British, and French effort resulted in an air and sea attack on three targets inside Syria – the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (CERS) in Barza neighborhood near the capital Damascus, and two facilities used to store equipment for the manufacture and stocking of chemical weapons in Shenshar village, western Homs governorate. The US Department of Defense uploaded [a map](#) on its official website showing the sites that were targeted in Syria, as well as [pictures of the facilities](#) that were bombed and the destruction in the aftermath of the strike. [Satellite imagery](#) released by CNN showed also the aftermath of the strikes on the three sites.



We've recorded a notable drop in the rates of killing and bombing by the Syrian-Russian alliance in the wake of the military strike despite being extremely limited. These very same limitations have encouraged the Syrian regime and its allies to gradually return to bombing, killing, and absolutely refusing any political solution. We have recorded tens of violations by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, especially in the areas of northern suburb of Homs and southern suburbs of Hama that started on April 15, as well as in areas in southern Damascus city (including al Yarmouk Camp and the towns of Yalda, Babbila, Beit Sahm, and the neighborhoods of al Qadam, al Assali, al Hajar al Asswad, and al Tadamun) since April 19.

Large segments of the Syrian people, who has suffered heavy, concentrated bombing on its populated areas for seven years during which hundreds of thousands of Syrians were killed, were hopeful that these strikes will target airbases and warplanes that drop barrel bomb and fire directed missiles, as only then will there be a tangible end for the killing and the Syrian regime and its allies will feel incapable of demolishing the Syrian society which will force them to seek political settlement.

On the other hand, there are prevalent fears that this military strike will be similar to the strike on al Shayrat Airbase last year with no deterring political or military action to follow, which enticed the Syrian regime to use chemical weapons again and continue to perpetrate all kinds of violations. For instance, SNHR team recorded 13 uses of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime between the first and second military strike.

Methodology

This report outlines the most notable violations by the Syrian-Russian alliance, including killings, attacks on vital civilian facilities, and use of barrel bombs and incendiary ammunition after the American-British-French strike between April 14, 2018 and April 28, 2018. We have the complete details of the incidents stored in SNHR archive.

Primarily, this report draws upon what SNHR team has been able to record through investigating these incidents, in addition to speaking to the victims' families and relatives we have been able to access. We also used information provided by local activists, and analyzed pictures and videos that were sent to us. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report in an online database and backup copies on hard drives. For more information please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [documenting victims](#) and [classifying vital civilian facilities](#).



the investigations included in this report have proved that the targeted areas were civilian areas where no military centers or armories for armed opposition factions or extremist Islamic groups were found before or during the attack. Also, the aggressing forces didn't alert the civilians prior to the attacks as the international humanitarian law requires.

SNHR has analyzed the videos and pictures that were posted online, or were sent to us by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media. Some of the videos published by activists show the location of the attacks, the dead bodies, the injured, and the huge destruction in the aftermath of the bombardment.

This report only represents the bare minimum, which we were able to document, of the magnitude and severity of the violation that occurred. It also doesn't cover the social, economic, and mental ramifications.

II. Executive Summary

A. Massacres and other acts of unlawful killing

SNHR has documented the killing of 64 civilians, including 12 children, 8 women (adult female), and 1 paramedic, distributed as follows:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 62, including 12 children, 7 women, and 1 paramedic, distributed by governorate as follows:

Damascus and its suburbs: 26, including 4 children and 4 women.

Homs: 12, including 1 child.

Hama: 10, including 2 children.

Idlib: 8, including 4 children and 1 woman.

Deir Ez-Zour: 3, including 2 women.

Quneitra: 1 child

- Russian forces: 2, including 1 woman, in Idlib governorate

Also, Syrian regime forces were responsible for 2 massacres – one in Damascus suburbs governorate while the other was in Homs governorate.

B. Attack on vital civilian facilities

We've documented, in the same period of time, that Syrian-Russian alliance carried out 9 attacks on vital civilian facilities, as follows:

Syrian regime forces: 8 facilities (1 mosque, 3 schools, 2 medical facilities, and 2 Red Crescent facilities)

Russian forces: 1 market



C. Use of incendiary ammunitions

We've documented 3 attacks using incendiary ammunitions in Hama governorate at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces

D. Use of barrel bombs

Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped 522 barrel bombs in the period of time covered by the report, as follows:

Damascus suburbs: 308

Damascus: 202

Hama: 8

Idlib: 4

III. Details

Most notable acts of unlawful killing

Damascus governorate

Friday, April 20, 2018, Syrian regime forces killed the paramedic [Jamal Samih Hamid](#) who was killed in a shelling by Syrian regime rocket launchers who fired a rocket near Palestine Hospital in al Yarmouk Camp for [Palestinian Refugees](#) in southern Damascus city. Jamal was killed as he was tending to the wounded from a previous shelling. The area was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

Saturday, April 21, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator) fired a number of missiles at al Yarmouk Camp in southern Damascus city, which resulted in the killing of three civilians from the same family (an infant and his parents). The area was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

Tuesday, April 24, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator) fired a number of missiles at Atta al Zir Street in a Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian Refugees in southern Damascus city, which resulted in the killing of six civilians at once, including three women. The area was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



Homs governorate

Sunday, April 15, 2018, Syrian regime forces, stationed in al Handasa al Asskariya Battalion in Homs governorate, opened fire on al Ken Farms, located in eastern al Rastan city, northern suburbs of Homs governorate, to kill the female child Asinat Tareq al Rez. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Monday, April 16, 2018, Syrian regime forces rocket launchers, stationed in al Handasa Battalion, in al Mashrafa village, shelled al Za'frana village, northern suburbs of Homs governorate, which resulted in the killing of five civilians who were mostly from the same family, including one woman. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Idlib governorate

Tuesday, April 17, 2018, Syrian regime forces artillery fired a number of shells at Ma'saran village, eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the killing of four civilian from the same family (three children and their mother). The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Aleppo governorate

Tuesday, April 24, 2018, Syrian regime forces artillery, stationed in Jam'iyat al Zahraa, western Aleppo city, fired a number of shells at Kafr Hamra village, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which resulted in the killing of two civilians from the same family. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

2- Most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities

A. Syrian regime forces

Places of worship

- Mosques

Saturday, April 21, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator) fired [a number of missiles](#) at Palestine [Mosque in al Yarmouk Camp](#) for Palestinian Refugees in southern Damascus city. The mosque building was partially destroyed and its furniture was moderately damaged. The camp was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



Vital educational facilities

- Schools

Sunday, April 15, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired two missiles at the Martyr Abdullah Suliman High School in Izz al din village, northern suburbs of Homs governorate. The school fence was partially destroyed, and its building and cladding materials were moderately damaged. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Vital medical facilities

- Medical facilities

Wednesday, April 25, 2018, Syrian regime forces helicopters dropped [a barrel bomb](#) near the [health center](#) in Kafr Sajna village, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The center building was partially destroyed and its equipment and furniture were heavily damaged, as well as the dental clinic. The center was rendered out of commission. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

International humanitarian insignia

- Red Crescent

Friday, April 20, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator) fired a number of missiles at Palestine Hospital, which is affiliated to the Palestinian Red Crescent, in al Yarmouk camp for Palestinian Refugees, southern Damascus city. The hospital building was heavily destroyed and its equipment was heavily damaged, as the hospital was rendered out of commission. The neighborhood was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

B. Russian forces

Communal facilities

- Markets

Tuesday, April 17, 2018, around 23:25, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired three missiles at [al Hal market](#) in western Kafranbel city, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in [the killing](#) of [one civilian](#). Additionally, a number of shops and the market facilities were heavily damaged. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction in the aftermath of a Russian air attack on al Hal market in Kafranbel city, Idlib –

April 17, 2018

3- Most notable incidents of incendiary ammunition use

Hama governorate

Friday, April 20, 2018, Syrian regime/Russian forces artillery (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator), stationed in southern Helfaya city, fired [four shells loaded with incendiary materials](#) on al Janoubi neighborhood in Kafr Zita city, northern suburbs of Hama governorate. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

IV. Attachments

The US president Donald Trump posted a number of [tweets](#) on his official Twitter account, in which he promised military retaliation in response to the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime

The US Donald Trump revealed that the military strike has been carried out in [a statement to the American people](#). Also, Jim Mattis, the US Secretary of Defense, held [a press conference](#) with the General Joseph Dunford, the Chairman of the of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the aftermath of the operation in which they clarified the preliminary information they have.



The official website of Élysée Palace, the French presidential palace, posted [a statement](#) that was issued by the French President Emmanuel Macron addressing its forces' involvement in the operation that aimed to limit the Syrian regime's ability to use chemical weapons. In addition, Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, spoke in the aftermath of the strike on Syria in [a statement](#) to address the role of the United Kingdom in the strike and the reasons behind their decision to take part in it.

The Syrian General Command of the Armed Forces released [a statement](#) that reads that the three states (the US, the UK, and France) have fired missiles at targets inside Damascus city, adding that their air defense systems have responded to the attack. The official Syrian news TV channel aired [a video](#) showing a remnant of one of those missiles that were shot down by the Syrian air defense systems according to the channel's claims. Another [video](#) aired by the channel showed the destruction at the CERS in the aftermath of the attack.

V. Legal Conclusions and Recommendations

1- The Syrian regime has, through the use of chemical weapons in Douma city, violated the customary international humanitarian law that prohibits the use of the chemical weapons no matter the circumstances. Secondly, the Syrian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated the CWC which the Syrian government acceded to in September 2013. The treaty provides for the prohibition of the use of poison gases and their destruction. Thirdly, the Syrian regime has violated all relevant Security Council Resolution – particularly 2118 in 2013, 2209 in 2015, and 2235 in 2015. Moreover, the use of chemical weapons constitutes a war crime according to the International Criminal Court Rome Statue.

2- The CWC, which the Russian government has ratified, explicitly prohibits any assistance or encouragement or contribution to any prohibited activity by a state party. However, a number of evidences have suggested that Russian forces have provided support for Syrian regime forces before and after their attacks.

3- The Russian-Syrian alliance has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolution 2139 and 2254 which states that indiscriminate attacks should be ceased. Also, they've violated Article 8 of Rome Statue through the crime of willful killing, which constitutes war crimes.

4- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report have targeted defenseless civilians. Therefore, Russian and Syrian forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantees the right to life. In addition, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which constitutes war crimes, as all elements have been fulfilled.



5- The attacks mentioned in this report, which have been carried out by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, constitute a violation of the customary international law considering that the shells were fired at populated areas rather than specific military targets.

6- Bombardments have resulted in collateral damages that involved the loss of civilian lives, injuries, and significant damages to civilian objects. There are strong indicators showing that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military advantage.

Recommendations

Security Council

- The Syrian regime has repeatedly violated three Security Council Resolutions, 2118, 2209, and 2235, even though they refer to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.
- The four permanent member states should apply pressure on the Russian government to cease its support for the Syrian regime who uses chemical weapons, as its implication in this regard has been proven.
- The Security Council should take practical and additional steps in the wake of the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces violating all the Resolutions adopted by the Security Council.
- The Security Council should take additional action as more than two years has passed since Resolution 2254 was adopted, where the Resolution demands that “all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment”
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who were implicated should be held accountable, including the Syrian regime whose involvement in war crimes have been proven.
- Instill security and peace in Syria and implement the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ norm in order to preserve the Syrians’ lives, culture, and arts from being destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- Expand sanction to include the Russian and Iranian regimes who have been involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.

OHCHR

The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other UN Organs on the incidents included in this report.



The international community

- In light of the Security Council's division and utter inability, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people. This would manifest in protecting the Syrian people from the daily killing and lifting the siege, as well as raising the support with respect to the relief efforts. Additionally, steps should be taken in order to exercise universal jurisdiction on these crimes before national tribunals as part of fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called, as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P)' norm in tens of studies and reports after all political initiatives, through the Arab League agreement and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan and the Cessation of Hostilities and Astana agreements that followed, have been to no avail. Therefore, after all of this, action should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the 'Responsibility to Protect' norm, which was established by the UN General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Works towards achieving justice and accountability in Syria through the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and use the principle of universal jurisdiction.
- The states should demonstrate a better unification in the face of the Syria regime, the primary and main use of chemical weapons in this century, and take serious, joint steps to impose strict, deterrent, real sanctions immediately.
- Form a humanitarian alliance that aims to protect Syrian civilians from chemical weapons and barrel bomb since Russia will continue to hinder the Security Council and use veto countless times.
- Take action to deter the Syrian regime from perpetrating all kinds of violations, including killing, and not only the use of chemical weapons.

Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, and make the findings of these investigations public to the Syrian people, as well as holding those who were involved accountable.
- Compensate all damaged facilities and rehabilitate them, as well as all the families of the victims and the wounded who were killed by the present Russian regime.
- Completely cease the bombardment on hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect the customary humanitarian law.



- Stop using veto in order to protect the Syrian regime who has been involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes, and using chemical weapons.
- Launch investigations into the support provided by Russian forces in Syria to the Syrian regime in the attack on Douma and the attacks that preceded.
- Stop hindering the referral the case in Syrian to the International Criminal Court.

Acknowledgment

Our most heartfelt condolences and gratitude to the families of the victims and the wounded. We would also like to thank the eyewitnesses, media workers, and local activists who contributed effectively to this report.





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