



The Syrian Regime Targets Children in Schools 38 Civilians Killed in a Bombing on Three Schools in Hass Village in Idlib governorate

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I. Introduction

Hass village is located between Ma'aret Al No'man city, to its east, and Kafr Nabbol, to its west. It is eight kilometers away from Ma'aret Al No'man city. The village is under the joint control of Armed opposition factions and Fateh Al Sham Front.

This report documents the targeting of a school complex that includes three schools in the village by fixed-wing government forces warplanes where SNHR team have contacted a number of residents, eyewitnesses, survivors, and local media activists. The report includes two accounts. We have explained the purpose of the interviews to the witnesses who gave us their permission to use the information they provided in this report.

Also, we have reviewed the pictures and videos we received and verified their authenticity. These pictures and videos show the great destruction in the schools buildings and pictures of the children victims. We have copies of all the pictures and videos mentioned in this report.

The investigations included in this report have proven that the targeted areas are civil areas where no military centers or weapon warehouses for armed opposition factions or extremist Islamic groups were found before or during the attack.





This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual magnitude and severity of the violation that occurred. Additionally, the report doesn't cover the social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

I. Details

On Wednesday 26 October 2016, at approximately 10:52 two “SU22” fixed-wing government forces warplanes targeted the southern neighborhood in Hass village where the Martyr Kamal Qal’aji school complex, which contains three schools, is located. One of the three schools is an elementary school while the other two are secondary schools. The bombing lasted for about 20 minutes during which the warplanes fired no less than nine missiles carried by parachutes.

The bombing was in two phases; where the first phase targeted the school buildings which led to the students leaving the schools, and then the warplanes targeted the students again on the main road. This implies that government forces deliberately planned to kill as many victims as possible.

The bombardment resulted in the killing of 38 civilians including 18 children and six women. Among the victims were 4 members of the teaching staff and 14 students.

One of the victims was Dr. Yousef Al Tarraf who died of his wounds after he was injured while he was trying to aid the wounded.

Picture showing the location of the Martyr Kamal Qal’aji school complex in Hass village in Idlib governorate. The map also shows the location on the main road where the students were targeted for a second time SNHR contacted Mr. Yasser Al





Tarraf, a local media activist, via WhatsApp:

“I headed to the targeted location in the southern parts of the village near the school complex after the first missile was dropped. The place was filled with people running and screaming for their children. Eight airstrikes were carried out consecutively on the same area. A great number of children and people, who went there to aid the injured, were killed including one of my relatives.”

“I saw a woman calling her son and looking for him between the dead bodies. She found his scattered body parts in one of the streets near his school. The missiles also resulted in huge destruction in the school buildings and the surrounding houses. The area is completely a civil area, there are just schools and residential houses and nothing that could be targeted, but the regime targets children as if they were terrorists. The regime is wiping off a whole generation.”

SNHR spoke to Mr. Sad Al Din Zidan, via Facebook, who helped in aiding the students and told us of what he saw:

“I was in Ma’aret Al No’mān when the Free Syrian Army observatory announced that there are warplanes soaring in the sky of Jabal Al Zawīya. The warplanes carried out the first airstrike on Hass village. I headed there and when I arrived, the warplanes carried out two consecutive airstrikes. The sound of the bombing was terrifying and the missiles were dropped with parachutes.”

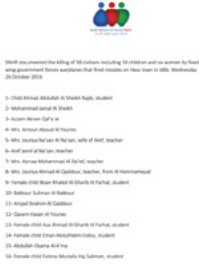
“A few minutes later, a new airstrike was carried out and it was only 30 meters away from me. We laid on the ground and Dr. Yousef Al Tarraf, who was aiding the wounded, sustained a critical injury. I saw children’s dead bodies everywhere and scattered body parts were all over the place between the destroyed schools. I went down to one of the shelters and found more than 150 students and a number of teachers who managed to get to the basement and save their lives. However, tens others lost their lives after these airstrikes.”





III. Appendixes and Attachments

Victims' Names



Pictures showing the destruction that resulted from the government warplanes' bombardment that targeted Hass village





Pictures of the victims who have fallen in the government warplanes' bombardment that targeted Hass village



[Video](#) showing one of the missiles being dropped n Hass village

[Video](#) showing victims being pulled out from rubbles after a bombing by government forces warplanes on Hass village





II. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

1- The Syrian regime has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be halted. Also, the regime violated Article 8 of Rome Statute through the act of willful killing which constitutes war crimes.

2- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted armless civilians. Therefore, government forces have violated the rules of the international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which amount to a war crime where all elements were fulfilled.

3- The attacks mentioned in this report, which were carried out by the Syrian regime, are considered a violation of the customary international law as the shells were fired at a populated area rather than a specific military object.

4- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, and significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Recommendations

The Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps as it has been a year since Resolution 2139 was adopted and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombardment operations have been made. All the conflict parties must respect these steps and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable
- To instill security and peace in Syria and implement the norm of the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect the lives, culture, and history of the Syrian people from being destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- To expand the sanctions to include the Syrian and Iranian regimes and all of their pillars who are directly involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.





The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Office must submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on this massacre specifically and the massacres that preceded considering that these massacres are an explicit and glaring sign among daily sporadic and less severe massacres. Also, the Office should try to implement the recommendations in the report.

The International Community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, Steps must be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect them from the daily killings and siege and enhance the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction must be activated in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in tens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were drought out. Therefore, steps under Article 7 of the Rome Stature must be taken and the norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, must be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- To renew the pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- To work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights council and work on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

Acknowledgment

Our thanks and condolences for the families and local activists who enriched this report majorly.

