

# The Annual Report of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2019

A Destroyed State and  
Displaced People

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Thursday, January 23, 2020

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 Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that primarily aims to document all violations in Syria, and periodically issues studies, research documents, and reports to expose the perpetrators of these violations as a first step to holding them accountable and protecting the rights of the victims.

It should be noted that [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) has relied, in all of its statistics, on the analysis of victims of the conflict in Syria, on the Syrian Network for Human Rights as a primary source, SNHR also collaborate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry and have signed an agreement for sharing data with the Independent International and Impartial Mechanism, UNICEF, and other UN bodies, as well as international organizations such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. A large number of Arab and international news agencies rely on the reports and statistics of the Syrian Network for Human Rights for their coverage and reports on Syria.



In 2019, the Syrian Network for Human Rights continued its work, issuing approximately 87 reports in which it addressed multiple patterns of the most prominent human rights violations committed by the main parties to the conflict in Syria, such as extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, forced displacement, and the use of prohibited munitions and other highly destructive munitions. These reports were based on approximately 242 testimonies of injured or survivors of the attacks, paramedics, central signal workers or victims' families. All these testimonies were obtained through direct conversation with the witnesses, and are not taken from open sources.

This report, like all other reports, is based on our method of documenting and archiving human rights violations in Syria, which can be found via this [link](#).

As always, we affirm that all the incidents cited in this report represent the bare minimum that we were able to document, given the magnitude and seriousness of the violations taking place, with this documentation not including analysis of the social, economic and psychological effects of these events, and that international humanitarian law and customary international law, along with international human rights law, are the legal references used in relation to the Syrian case.

In addition, the report includes detailed chronological records of political, judicial and military events that occurred in 2019 to serve as a timeline within the documentation process of recording the most prominent of these events within the archives of the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

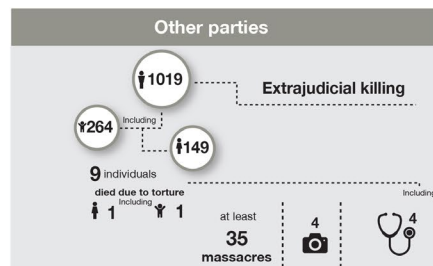
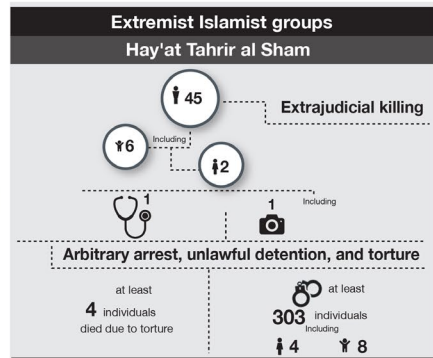
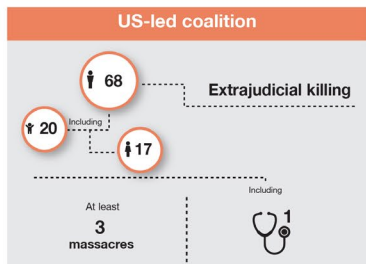
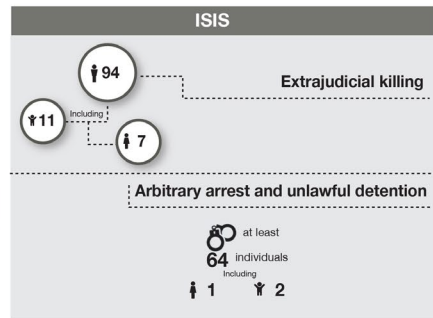
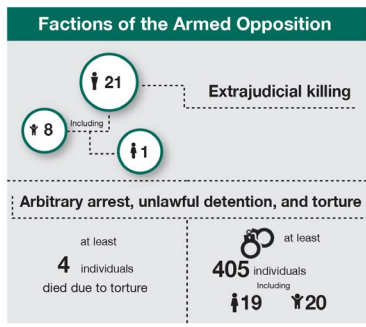
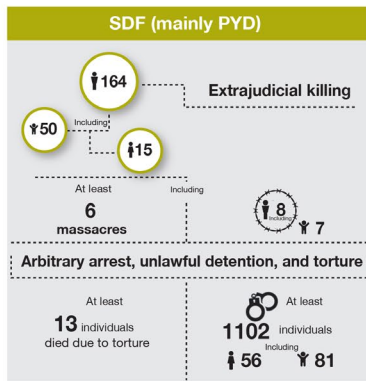
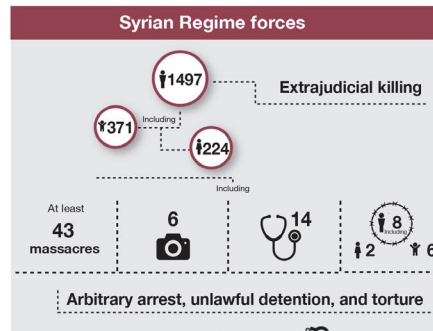
### **Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights:**

“The most severe thing that Syrians experienced in 2019 was the continuation of horrific violations for the eighth consecutive year, with additional areas being subjected to bombing, destruction and displacement. This Syrian crisis, which includes the commission of crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, forms a terrible stain on the contemporary history of mankind, particularly since, despite the slaughter continuing for many years and being documented in many reports, the Security Council has taken no action to end it, and no international civilized coalitions have been formed to protect civilians outside the Security Council even after its utter failure to perform its duties.”

## **II. Executive Summary**

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations by the main parties to the conflict in Syria from January 1, 2019, until December 31, 2019



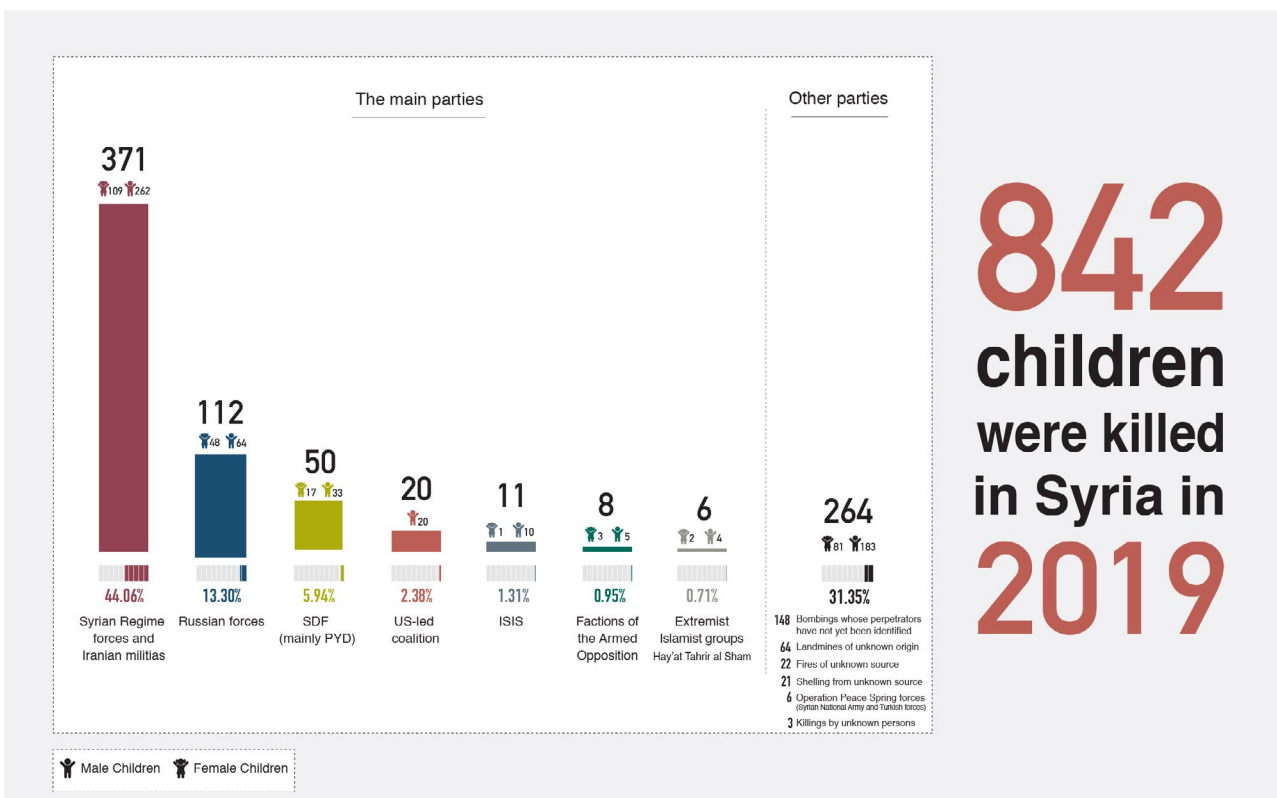
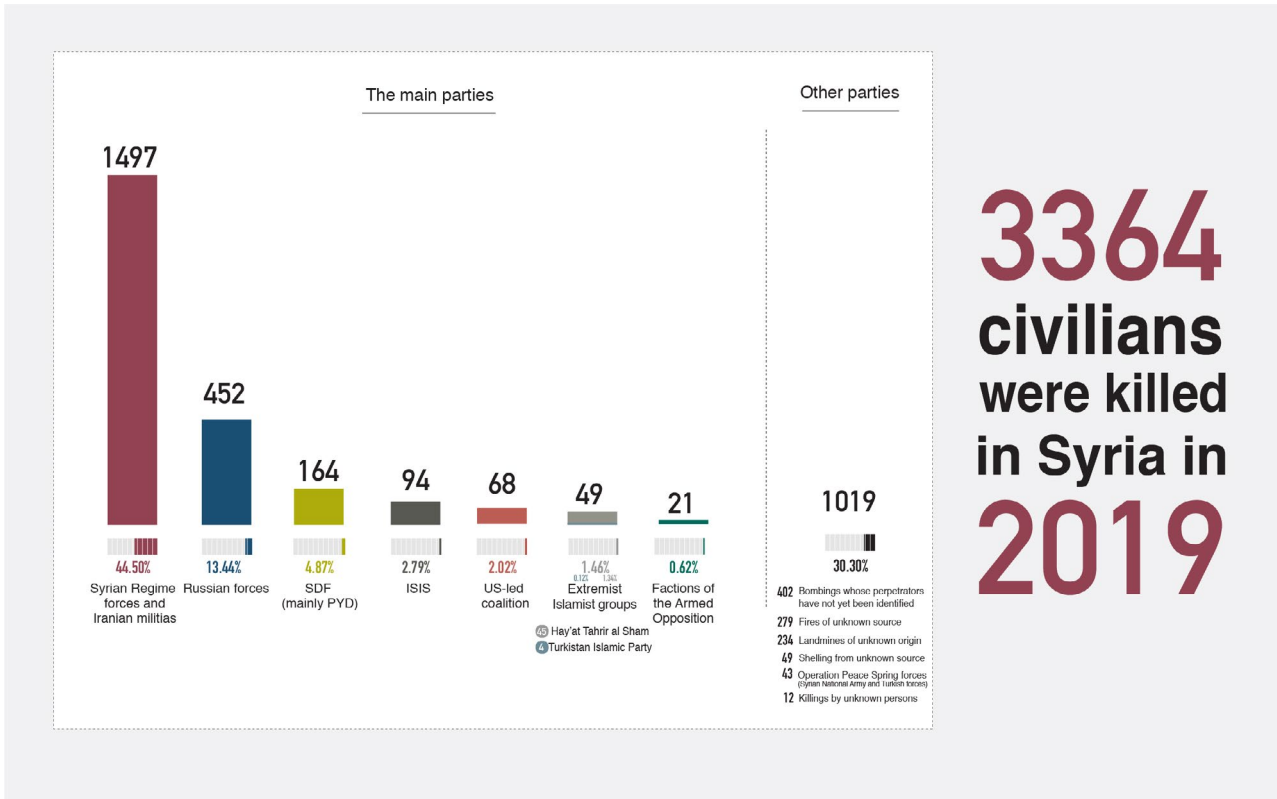


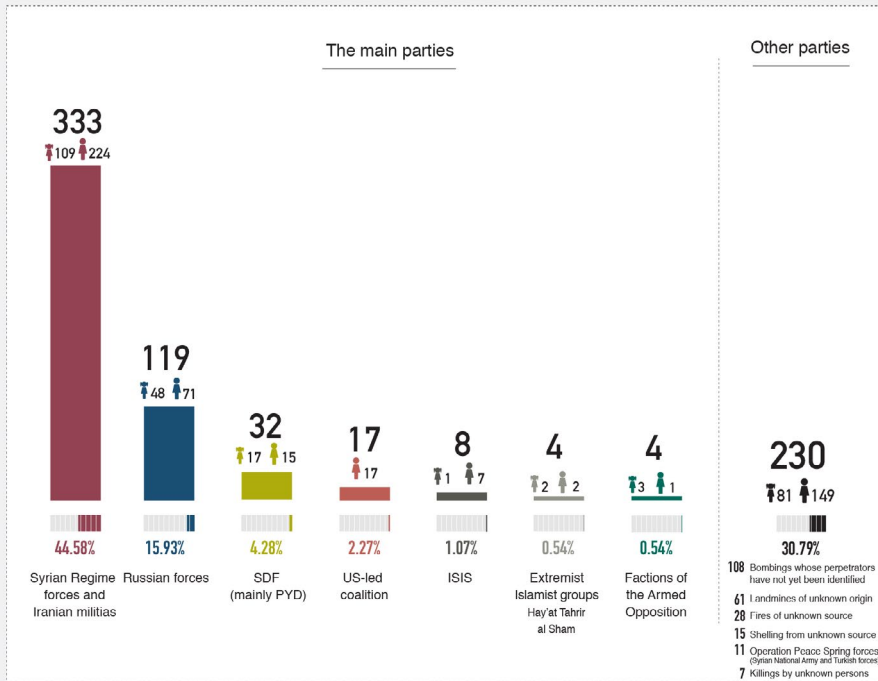
**Nearly one million forcibly displaced persons as a result of the military operations by the parties to the conflict**



## 1- Extrajudicial killing:

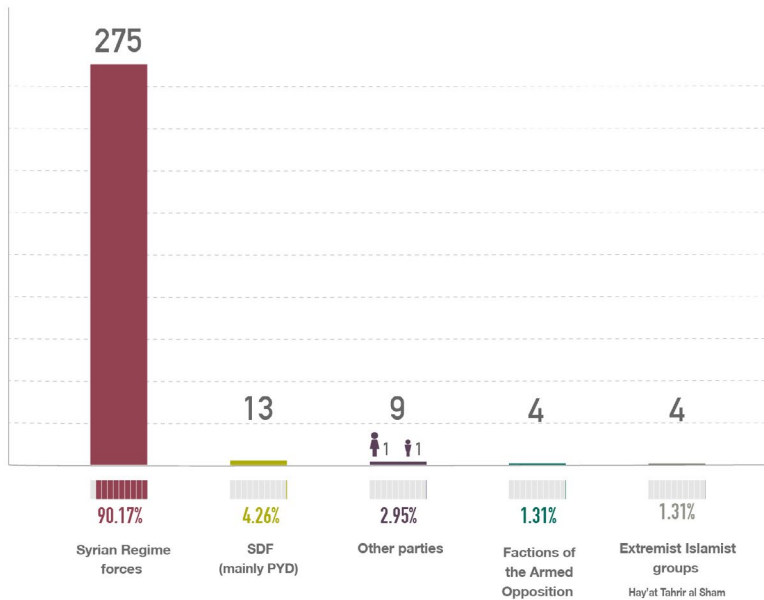
SNHR documented in 2019 the deaths of 3,364 civilians, including 842 children and 486 women (adult female), killed at the hands of the perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria, distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:





**747**  
females  
were killed  
in Syria in  
**2019**

Distributed as follows:



**305**  
individuals  
died due to torture  
at the hands of  
the main parties in Syria in  
**2019**



#### A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 1,497 civilians, including 371 children and 224 women.
- **Russian forces:** 452 civilians, including 112 children and 71 women.
- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'):** 94 civilians, including 11 children and seven women.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
  - o **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition):** 45 civilians, including six children and two women.
  - Turkistan Islamic Party:** four civilians.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 21 civilians, including eight children and one woman.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 164 civilians, including 50 children and 15 women.
- **US-led coalition:** 68 civilians, including 20 children and 17 women.

#### B. Other parties:

1,019 civilians, including 264 children and 194 women, were killed by other parties, distributed as follows:

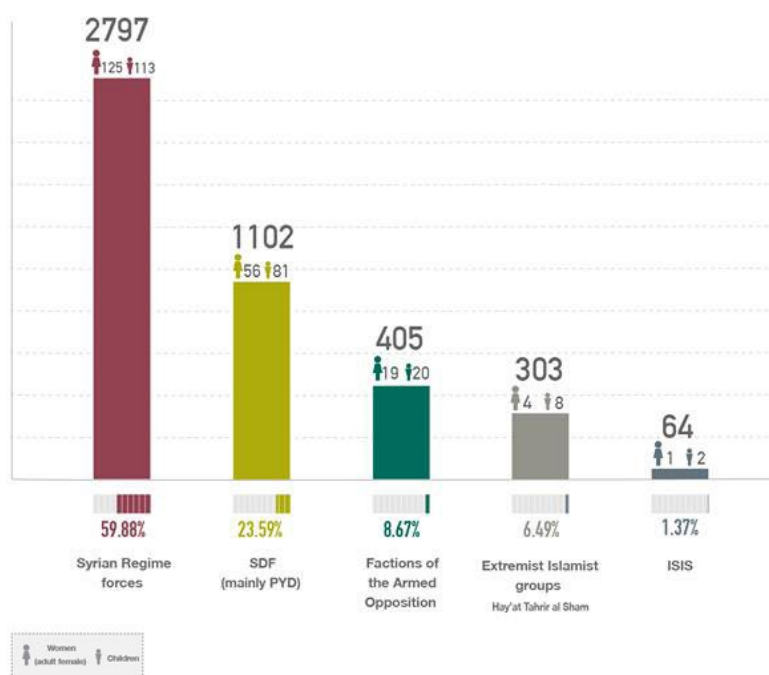
- Shelling from unknown source: 49 civilians, including 21 children and eight women.
- Landmines of unknown origin: 234 civilians, including 64 children and 39 women.
- Fires of unknown source: 279 civilians, including 22 children and 19 women.
- Operation Peace Spring forces (Syrian National Army and Turkish forces): 43 civilians, including six children and 10 women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 402 civilians, including 148 children and 66 women.
- Killings by unknown persons: 12 civilians, including three children and seven women.

#### **2- Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:**

**SNHR's team documented at least 4,671 cases of arbitrary arrests in 2019, including 224 children and 205 women (adult female), distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:**



Distributed as follow :



At least  
**4671**  
cases of  
arbitrary arrest  
in Syria by the  
perpetrator parties in  
**2019**

- A. Syrian Regime forces:** 2,797 individuals, including 113 children and 125 women.
- B. ISIS:** 64 individuals, including two children and one woman.
- C. Extremist Islamist groups:**
  - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: 303 individuals, including eight children and four women.
- D. Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 405 individuals, including 20 children and 19 women.
- E. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces:** 1,102 individuals, including 81 children and 56 women.

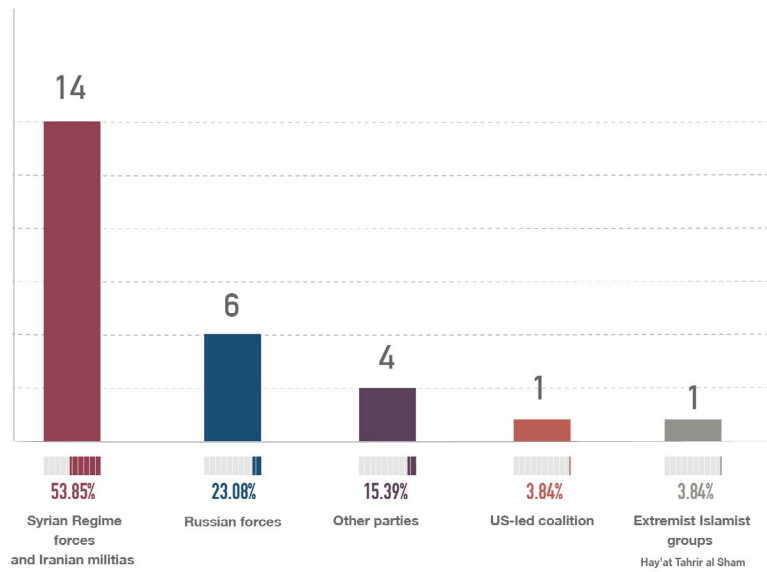
### 3- Targeting medical personnel:

SNHR documented in 2019 the deaths of 26 medical personnel, distributed according to the perpetrator parties to the conflict as follows:





Distributed as follows:



**26**  
medical  
personnel  
were killed  
at the hands of

the main parties in Syria in

**2019**

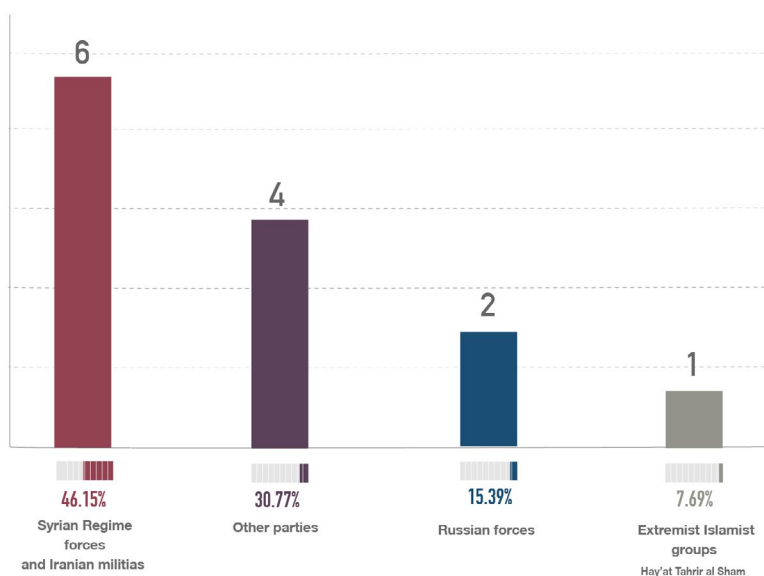
- **Syrian Regime forces:** 14
- **Russian forces:** Six
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
  - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: One
- **US-led coalition:** One
- **Other parties:** Four

#### 4- Targeting media workers:

SNHR documented in 2019 the deaths of 13 media workers, distributed according to the perpetrator parties to the conflict as follows:



Distributed as follows:



**13**  
media workers  
were killed  
at the hands of  
the main parties in Syria in  
**2019**

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Six
- **Russian forces:** Two
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
  - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: One
- **Other parties:** Four

#### 5- Attacks using outlawed weapons:

- Chemical Weapons: We documented one chemical weapons attack by Syrian Regime forces.
- Cluster Munitions: We documented 56 cluster munition attacks, distributed by the perpetrator parties as follows:
  - Syrian Regime forces: 52
  - Russian forces: Four
- Incendiary Weapons: We documented 22 incendiary weapons attacks, all carried out by Syrian Regime forces.
- Nail-missiles: We documented seven attacks using nail-filled missiles in 2019, all of which were carried out by Syrian Regime forces.
- Barrel bombs: We documented at least 4,378 barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian regime.

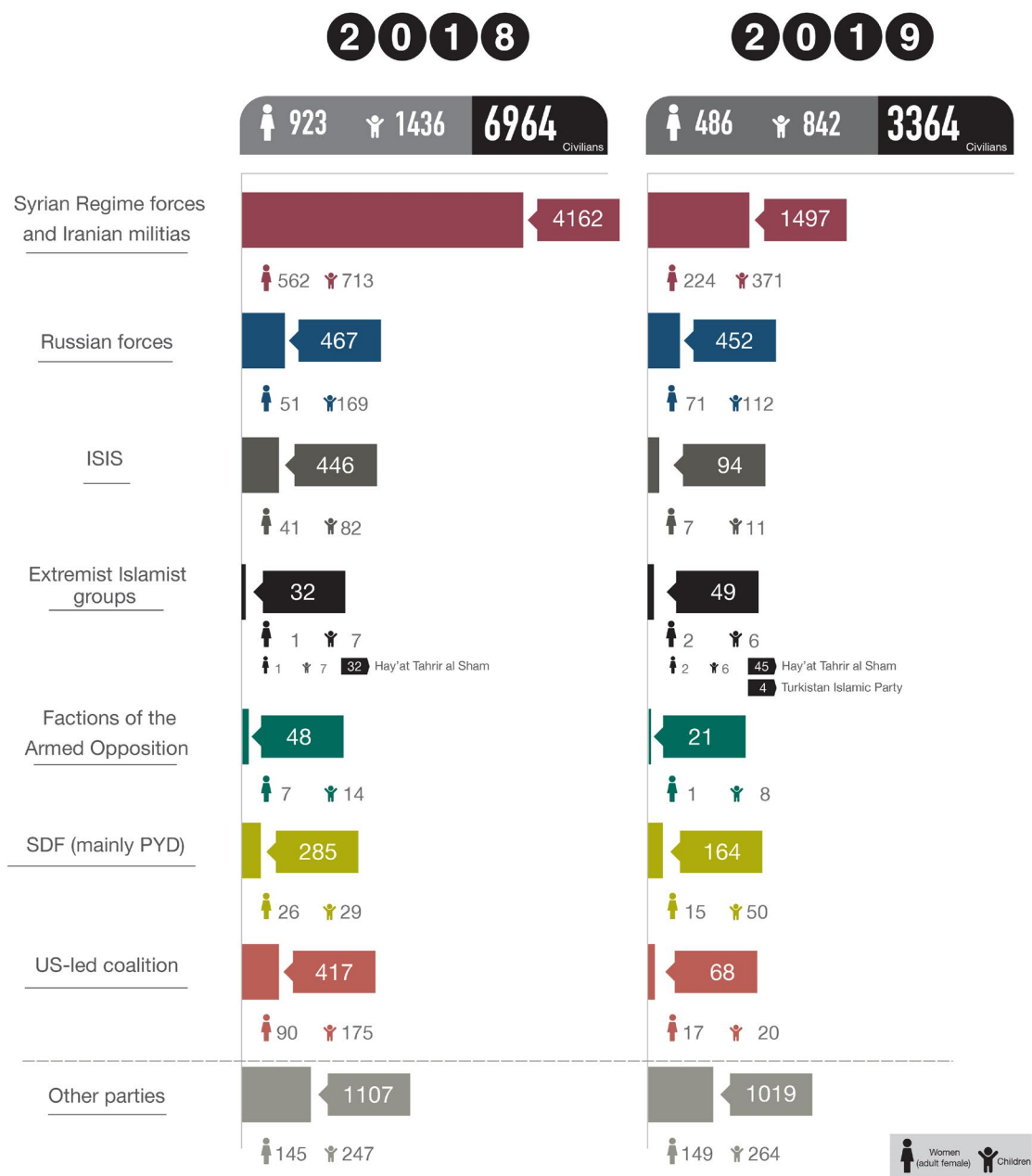


### III. Comparison between the Most Notable Patterns of Human Rights Violations in 2018 and 2019

Comparison of the death tolls of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019

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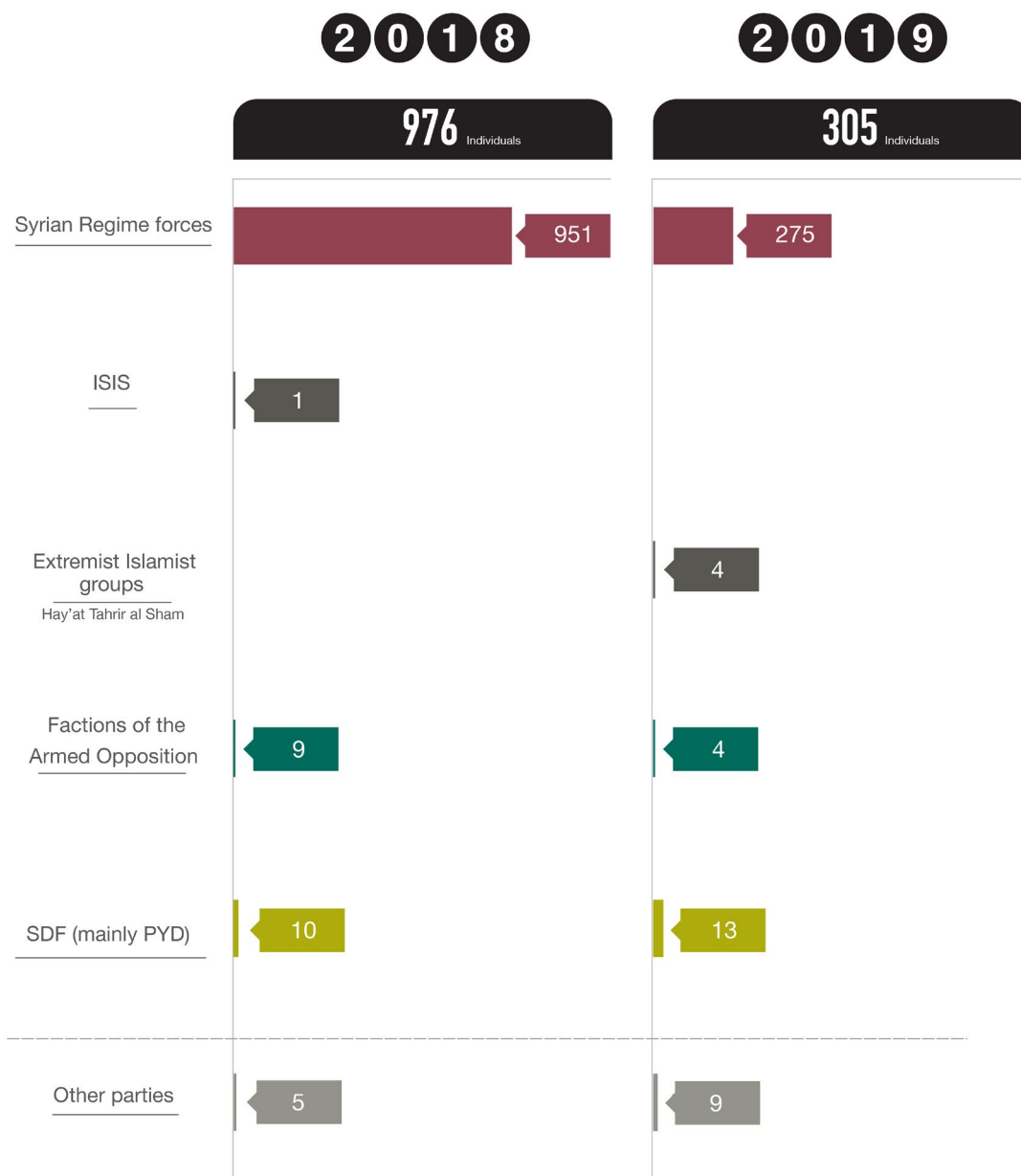
**Comparison of the death tolls of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**



Comparison of the death tolls of victims who died under torture at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019

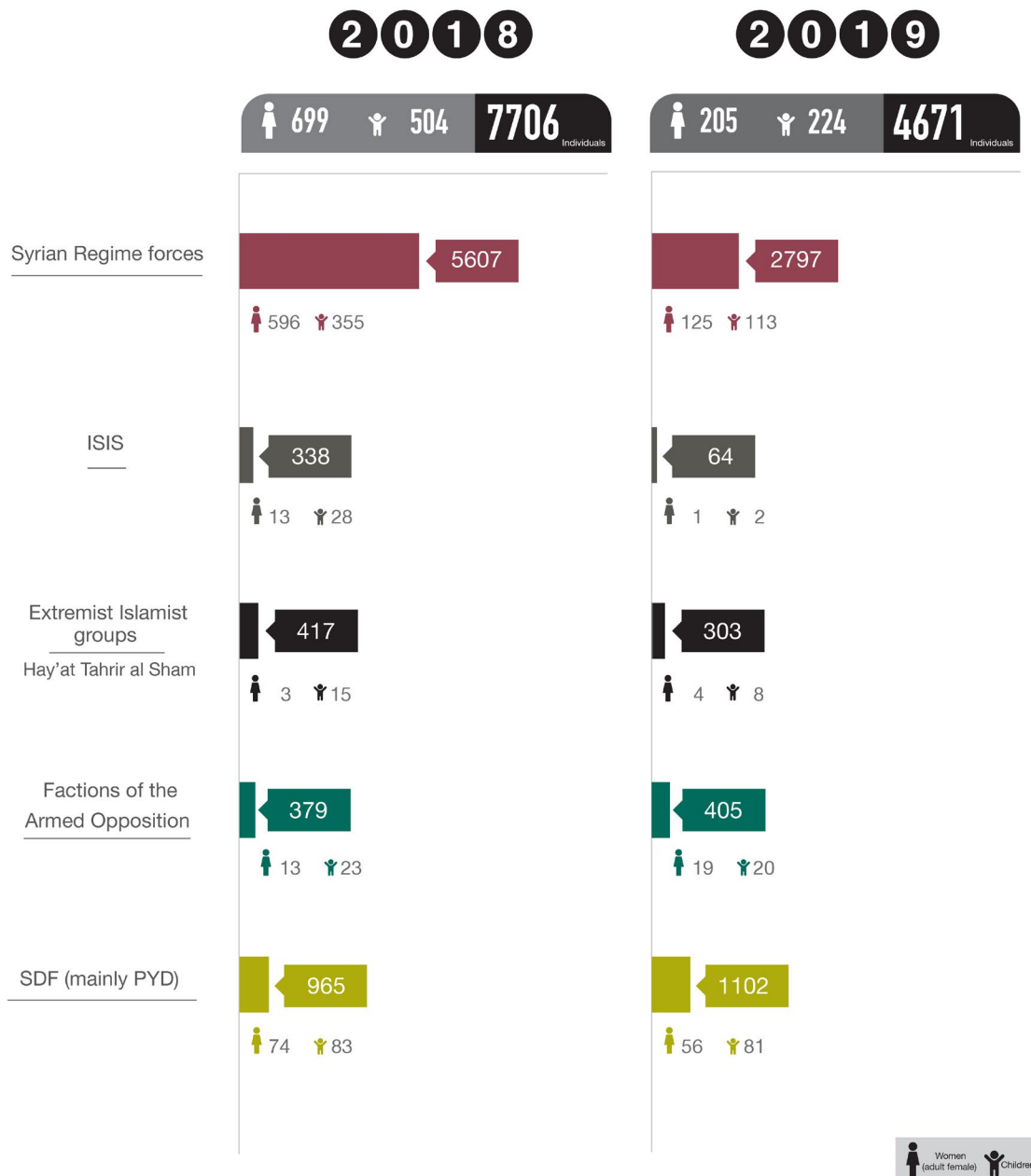
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**Comparison of the death tolls of victims who died under torture at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**



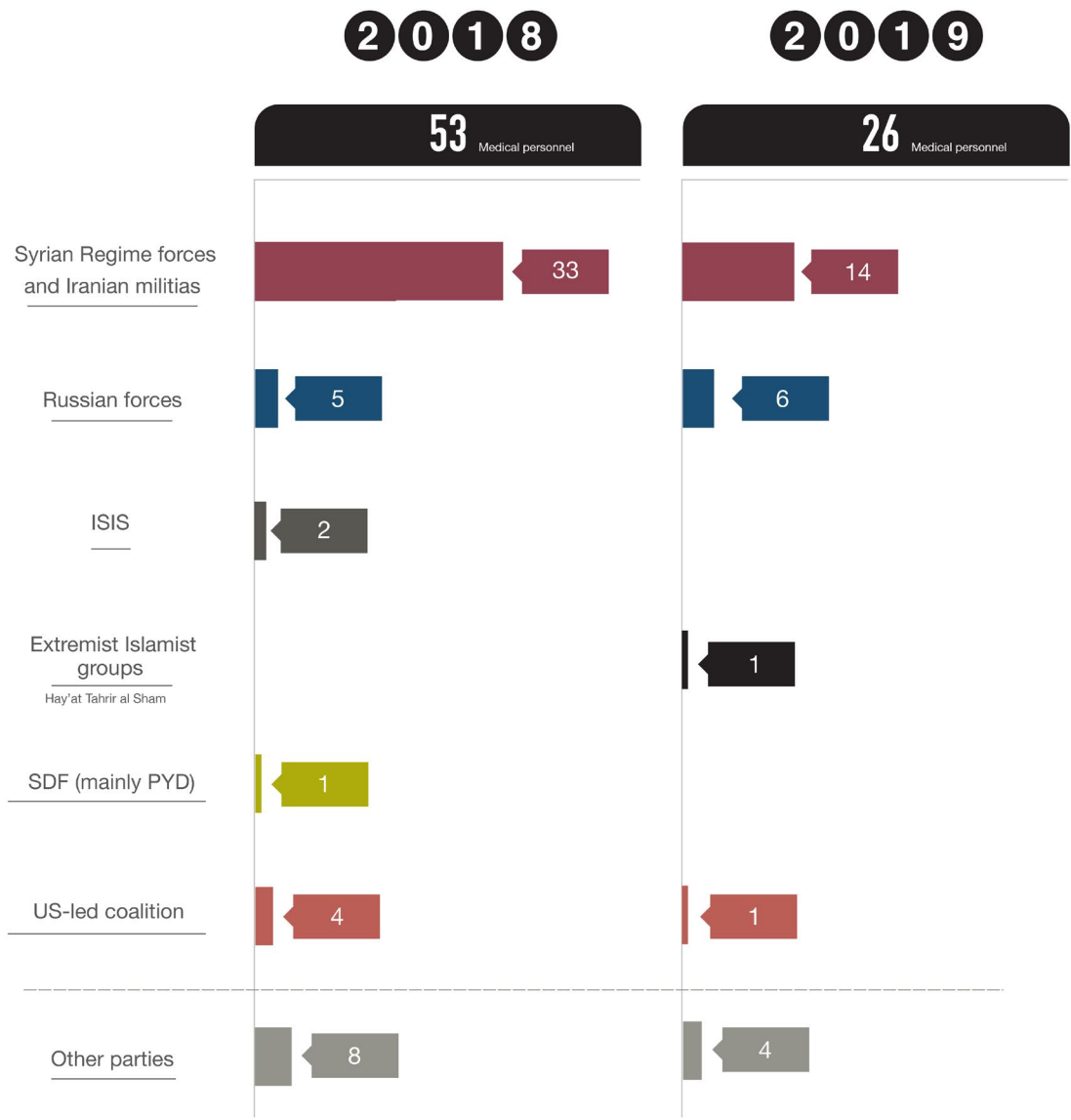
Comparison of the record of cases of arbitrary arrests at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019

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**Comparison of the record of cases of arbitrary arrests at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**

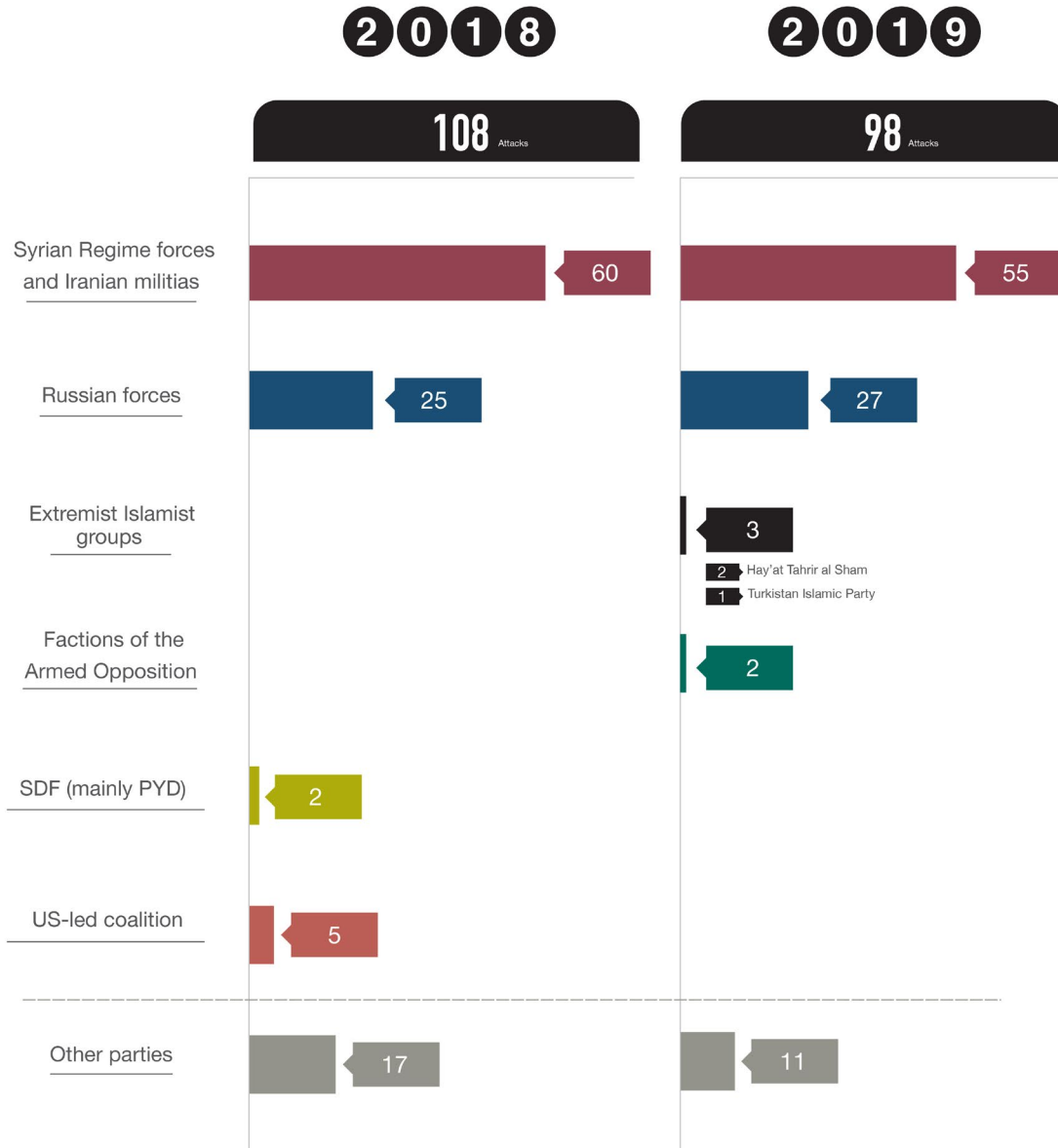


Comparison of the death tolls of medical personnel and incidents of attacks against their medical facilities committed by the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019

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**Comparison of the record of medical personnel killed at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**



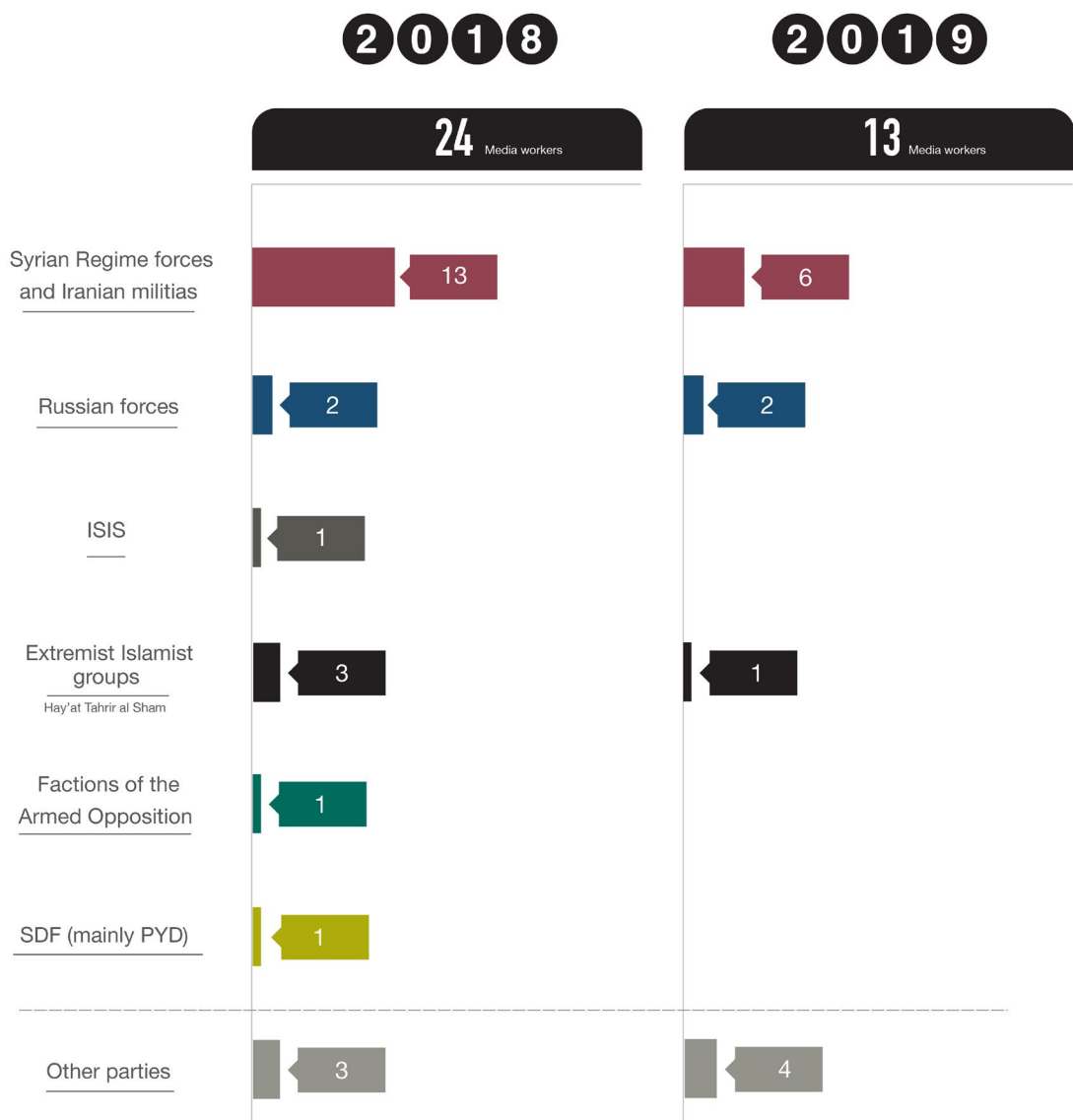
**Comparison of the record of incidents of attacks against medical facilities committed by the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**



Comparison of the record of media workers killed at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019

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**Comparison of the record of media workers killed at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**

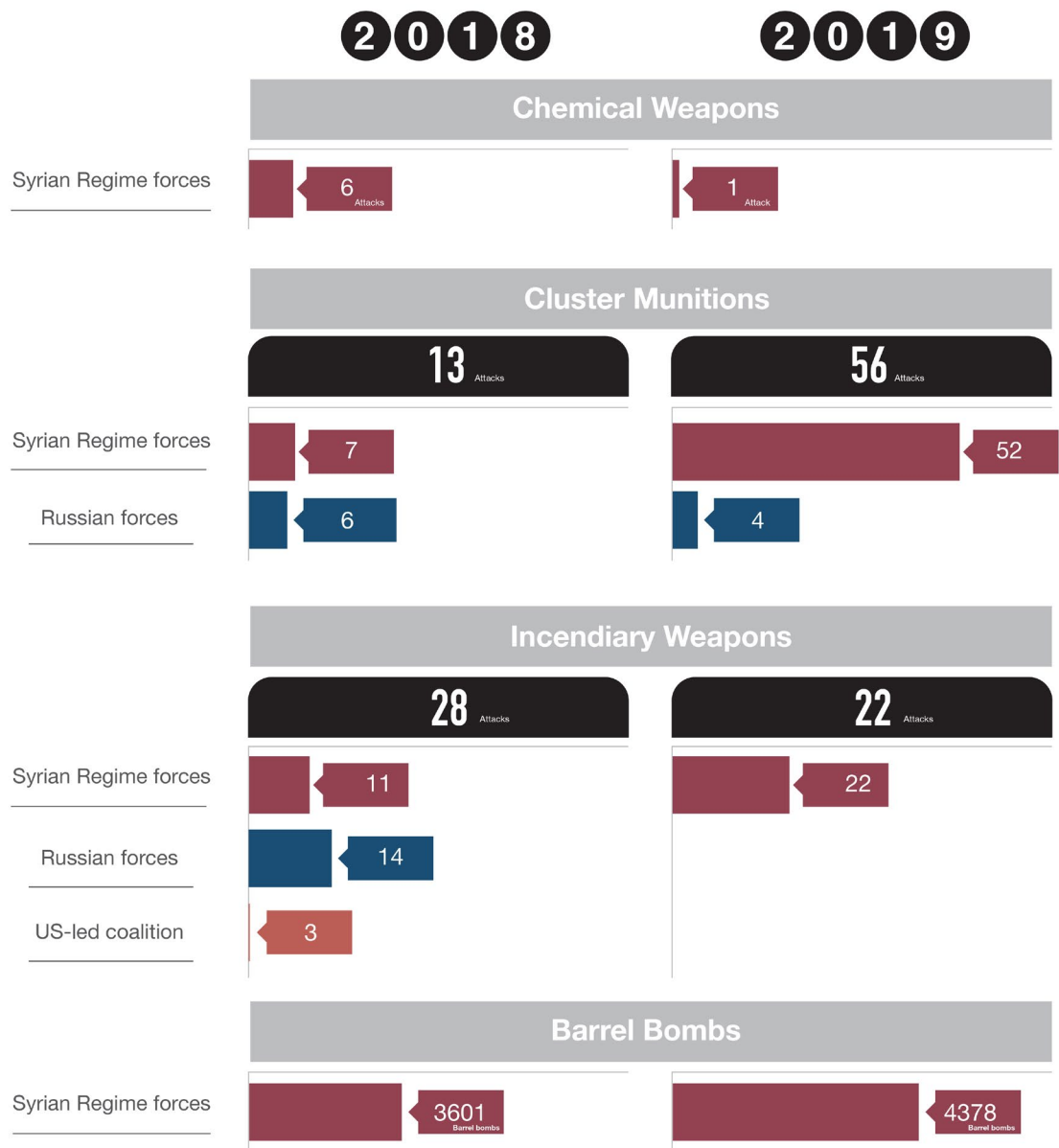




Comparison of the record of attacks using outlawed weapons carried out by the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019

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**Comparison of the record of attacks using outlawed weapons carried out by the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2018 and 2019**



## IV. Major Events in 2019

After the Syrian regime, supported by Russian and Iranian forces, managed to take complete control of three areas that had been subject to the de-escalation agreement in 2018, and to forcibly displace their residents to the Idlib region, 2019 saw a systematic completion of the policy of isolating regions and taking control of one after the other, with Idlib region, which includes nearly 3 million people, half of them displaced from other regions, becoming the scene of Syrian-Russian military operations and a place where the most serious human rights violations are taking place.

As in previous years, any political movement has always been accompanied by an escalation of military operations on the ground; coinciding with the holding of the 12th round of the Astana conference in the Kazakh capital, Nursultan (Astana), on April 25-27, the Syrian-Russian alliance forces escalated their military operations in the Idlib region, which resulted, over the next eight months, in their taking control of large areas including towns and villages, though which they controlled strategic areas such as al Latamena and Kafr Zita cities in the northern suburbs of Hama, and Khan Sheikhoun city and its environs in the southern suburbs of Idlib, before moving towards almost daily targeting of other cities such as Ma'aret al Numan, Kafranbel and other cities and towns to intimidate the population and force them towards displacement; within eight months, the Syrian regime managed to control nearly 20 percent of the total area of the fourth de-escalation zone.

Once again, the sessions of the Constitutional Committee (in which the Committee's Large Body's met between October 30 and November 1, while the Committee's Small Body's held its first meeting between November 4-8, and its second between November 25-30) coincided with continued violent bombing operations carried out by the Russian forces in particular in an attempt to impose a fait accompli on the ground, to achieve the ultimate goal of putting a decisive military end to any hope of political solution and maintaining the rule of the Assad family's regime.

In the areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces, civilians are living in terror of the Syrian regime, which continues to carry out arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and forced conscriptions without seeking to provide any tangible improvement in the humanitarian situation. The population lives in continuously deteriorating living conditions in light of a sharp decrease in electricity and heating services, a steep rise in food prices, and an increase in the unemployment rates. Meanwhile, Russia, the state that has stood by the Syrian regime and supported it in every form of violations the regime committed, as well as committing multiple patterns of violations itself, did not contribute to any tangible material support for the restoration of the facilities and buildings it bombed, but sought to expand



its influence on Syrian territory through its control of the most notable vital facilities, as happened in an agreement to lease the port of Tartous, which stipulates that Moscow will assume the tasks of expanding the port and modernizing its capabilities for use in economic and logistical purposes for 49 years.

Five years since the US-led coalition intervened in Syria, it was announced on March 23, 2019, that ISIS had been eliminated, following intensified military operations in the Hajin area since the end of 2018. After gaining control of this area, the US-led coalition stopped its airstrikes, with the type of military operations in the area changing to joint patrols between the US-led coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces to target the remaining ISIS cells. Despite supposedly being carefully planned and carried out to ensure high levels of accuracy, these operations have led to civilian casualties, as we documented from one such attack on al Sh-heil city on May 9, 2019, and in another on al Keshkiya town on January 3, 2019.

In 2019, the areas under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces saw a marked increase in the frequency of arrests targeting IDPs who had been displaced to areas under SDF's control, mainly in camps; in most of those arrests that weren't aimed at conscripting detainees, the SDF alleged that there are links between these detainees and ISIS, but provided no evidence to substantiate these allegations in any of these cases. While we recorded the release of a number of individuals by Syrian Democratic Forces, either in exchange for ransom paid by the detainees' families or after mediation by dignitaries and tribal sheikhs in the areas where arrests took place, the rest of the arrests are now categorized as cases of enforced disappearance, in light of the SDF's denial of having detained these individuals, their families' lack of knowledge of their places of detention and the families being prevented from communicating with or visiting their loved ones and vice versa. We have also documented a slight improvement in the living conditions in Raqqa city, which has begun to witness restoration and reconstruction operations nearly two years since Syrian Democratic Forces took control of it, but the city is still witnessing the spread of ISIS cells, which reflects a clear deficiency in managing the region and maintaining its security.

Turkish forces also participated in military operations in cooperation with the Syrian National Army forces to control Syrian territory adjacent to the Syrian-Turkish border in areas under the control of the SDF and factions of the Armed Opposition. Clashes and bombing operations between the two parties resulted in the deaths of a number of civilians, and also caused damage to civilian vital facilities and the displacement of thousands more civilians, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Many medical organizations announced the closure of their medical facilities in northeast Syria (Raqqa and Hasaka governorates) following the start of Operation Peace Spring, due to the displacement of their medical personnel.



## **Indiscriminate attacks and prohibited weapons**

Despite a decrease in the frequency of the Syrian-Russian alliance's use of cluster munitions in 2018, 2019 saw a new escalation in the use of this type of munitions, especially by Syrian Regime forces. Two cluster munition attacks launched by the Syrian regime in early February 2019, the first on al Tah village in the southern suburb of Idlib and the second on Talmennes village in the eastern suburb of Idlib, marked the beginning of a series of cluster munitions attacks in the Idlib region (the fourth de-escalation zone).

The Syrian regime uses cluster munitions often to completely paralyze life in the areas under attack, with the areas targeted being effectively transformed into minefields due to the presence of hundreds of cluster submunition bomblets that failed to explode on the initial impact. These remnants remain active until they explode spontaneously or when they're triggered by anybody approaching them, meaning they can kill and maim dozens of innocent people.

It seems that the international community's reaction to the Douma chemical attack in April 2018 did not prevent the Syrian regime from repeating its use of the chemical weapon in 2019, when its forces stationed in al Jeb al Ahmar area used chemical weapons as part of their military advance in Latakia suburbs [on May 19, 2019, targeting a hill located on the southwestern part of al Kbaina village in Latakia suburbs.](#)

As in previous years, Syrian Regime forces continued to use incendiary weapons in agricultural and populated areas far from the front lines; these attacks in 2019 were concentrated on Idlib governorate in particular; the widespread use of these weapons in civilian areas causes fear and terror in the hearts of the population, forcing them to surrender or flee in fear for their lives. In 2019, we monitored the use of a type of incendiary weapon launched via ground platforms, which is similar to cluster munitions in its indiscriminate impact, causing the outbreak of fires in many locations, which spread over large areas, causing severe injuries and burns to many people.

After the Sochi agreement in September 2018 succeeded in temporarily curbing the Syrian regime's use of barrel bombs, the Syrian regime's helicopters and fixed-wing warplanes returned to dropping barrel bombs on April 30, 2019, i.e. four days after the start of the recent military campaign on the Idlib region; hundreds of barrel bombs have fallen on areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, targeting homes, residential neighborhoods and vital civilian facilities, The total number of barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian regime in the second half of 2019 exceeded the total dropped by its warplanes and helicopters in the whole of 2018, according to the SNHR's documentation.



In the absence of international condemnation and denunciation of the Syrian regime's use of indiscriminate weapons, 2019 saw the Syrian regime using another barbaric indiscriminate weapon, namely small-sized missiles whose heads are filled with hundreds of steel nails, most of which were used against populated areas; according to SNHR's documentation, we have noted that these attacks are carried out by the Syrian regime's L-39 fixed-wing warplanes.

### **Continuous violations against children and women**

In 2019, as in previous years, children in Syria were subjected [to multiple patterns of violations](#) including extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrest, and enforced disappearance, in addition to death due to torture in the regime's official and unofficial detention centers, followed by child conscription, low educational level, and denial of healthcare. In some areas, the school enrollment rate for children has dropped to 0%; the main reasons for this decline are the forced displacement of half of the Syrian people, the difficulty for parents of finding employment, making it impossible to afford basic education costs, and the deliberate bombing of schools, mainly by Syrian-Russian alliance forces. In addition to these grave problems, extremist Islamist groups have taken over some of the schools and turned them into training camps, or - if they are maintained as schools - imposed extremist curricula that serve their agenda. Similarly, the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces have imposed curricula with racist discrimination in some schools in the areas they controlled.

[2019 was another terrible year for Syrian women and girls](#), due to the persistence of the types of violations that have been practiced in previous years, with a decline in the levels of relief support and political and media attention. We have monitored the continuation of the violations committed against women and girls, especially killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, of which we have recorded unprecedentedly high record numbers perpetrated by Syrian Regime forces, factions of the Armed Opposition and Syrian Democratic Forces. These have coincided with acts of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment and sexual violence, in addition to targeting women and girls for forced conscription. It is true that the vast majority of women who have been subjected to violations are civilians, but a small proportion of women and girls have been directly involved in hostilities and have been subjected to violence and to greater levels of abuse than men when they are captured due to being female. The frequency of targeting females for abduction, often according to their ethnicity, by factions of the Armed Opposition and SDF forces has also increased, with many abducted as hostages to force their communities to acquiesce to the dominant forces in the area. Females, especially activists engaged in civil activities, have also been harassed, threatened and persecuted, and prevented from working mainly by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.



## **Deliberate practices impede return of IDPs and refugees**

Despite the horrendous living conditions endured by refugees, particularly in the countries bordering Syria, given the decline in the level of support and services, and the high levels of threats and racism against refugees, who are held responsible for problems over which they have no control, such as water and air pollution, elections and garbage, we cannot say in any real sense that there is any genuinely voluntary return to areas of the Syrian regime. Although some Syrian refugees in some of the bordering countries have agreed to return; they have effectively been forced to do so by relentless racism, denial of the most basic services, and a well-founded pervasive sense of fear and threat. All this suggests a pattern of strongly coercive policies.

Despite all these factors, of the total number of refugees, the percentage of those who returned to Syria does not exceed six percent at most, which is the rate of “voluntary” return of refugees from Lebanon; this is far lower in Jordan, with barely 2 percent of the refugees there returning, which indicates definitively that there is no confidence among refugees in the current ruling Syrian regime, its security apparatus, or the Russian and Iranian militias supporting it. Meanwhile, many in Syria are still attempting to flee the nation and to seek refuge in other countries worldwide. The situation will continue indefinitely in light of the absence of any prospect of a just political settlement that fulfills the most basic demands of the Syrians to hold the perpetrators of crimes against humanity accountable and to dismiss the government and the regime, which is the main root of the issue and of all the aforementioned problems.

Those Syrians, whether IDPs or refugees, who decide to return to areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces face the danger of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, death due to torture, and forced conscription into the regime forces, in addition to looting of their property and confiscation of their homes, as well as severe shortages of services in the areas to which they have returned, with local authorities rehabilitating the infrastructure and services in some areas, but not others.

For example, we have not observed any actual significant return by the people of Daraya city, and the old Homs neighborhoods controlled by Syrian Regime forces since May 2014. The main reason for this is the people’s well-justified terror of the Syrian regime and fear of arrest and torture. What we observed of the actual return of the population was very limited, as is also the case in the villages and towns west of the Euphrates River in Deir Ez-Zour, where thousands of people remain displaced since Syrian Regime forces and affiliated militias took control of their areas since the end of 2017; after we recorded the return of a small percentage of these displaced during the past two years, we have monitored this return movement halting after the launch of arrests and prosecutions by Syrian Regime forces against the returnees.



The SNHR documented in 2019 at least 1,893 arrests of individuals who had conducted security settlement procedures, with a number of these individuals being forcibly disappeared.

The SNHR also documented in 2019 at least 256 arrests against individuals who returned to Syria from asylum countries, with the aim of these arrests often being to conscript them into compulsory military service.

As for the areas under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, around 50,000 IDPs, most of whom fled from the villages and towns extending from Hajin city to al Baghouz town, being displaced as a result of the military operations between ISIS and the SDF supported by the US-led coalition, are still detained inside al Hawl Camp in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka, where the SDF prevents them from leaving the camp and returning to their homes on the pretext of instability and lack of safety and the proliferation of mines in that area, despite the announcement that it had eliminated ISIS at the end of March 2019 and established its control over villages and towns located east of the Euphrates River. We have recorded that the SDF has allowed nearly 1,000 families to leave the al Hawl Camp in groups of varying sizes, the last of which was in mid-December 2019 after the payment of 'bail' by the tribal dignitaries in the eastern region.

### **Confiscating property and legalizing looting of property:**

In parallel with the military attacks launched by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces on north-west Syria, the Syrian regime has worked to establish its absolute domination over the areas under its control; as in the previous year, 2018, it issued decrees and laws in 2019 that enable it to confiscate the property of its opponents and seize their money. According to statements by the Deputy Minister of Finance in the Syrian regime government 'Bassam Abdul Nabi' to one of the pro-Syrian regime media outlets, the seizure of property and money affected 10,315 people, from the beginning of 2019 until the end of September 2019.

A number of news websites have [published](#) documents which they claim were leaked by government departments affiliated with the Syrian regime, stating that the Baath Party branch in Hama governorate issued Decision No. 264 at the end of August 2018, which allowed the confiscation of agricultural and non-agricultural lands belonging to all those opposing the regime, who have been classified as terrorists.



On December 17, 2019, the Syrian People's Assembly affiliated with the government of the Syrian regime approved an amendment to paragraph (e) of Article 97 of [the Military Service Law](#) of 2007 related to the [payment of a missed military](#) service fee. The amendment included the abolition of reserve seizure and the replacement of executive seizure, thereby giving the state the right to seize confiscated money and property, not only freezing them, with the condition of notification or warning stipulated in accordance with the Public Funds Collection Law removed.

The Syrian regime did not stop at the confiscation of the property of individuals opposing it. On December 18, 2019, the People's Assembly passed new legislation entitled "Dissolving the [General Union of Residential Collectives](#) in the Syrian Arab Republic and the cooperative housing unions in the governorates", confiscating members' property and money, thereby transferring the property and possessions of this union's members from the ownership of civil non-governmental organizations and placing them at the disposal of the Syrian regime.

### **Displacement and forced displacement**

Homelessness and forced displacement remain among the most aggravated consequences of the armed conflict; 2019 saw hundreds of thousands more people displaced from various areas of northern Syria, both northwest and northeast, which saw military attacks launched by multiple parties to the conflict.

In the north-eastern areas of Syria, the first quarter of 2019 saw displacement and forced displacement movement from the villages and towns of al Sousa, al Sha'fa, and al Baghouz, which ISIS had controlled at the time, with the number of civilians who were displaced from these areas reaching nearly 70,000 due to the battles that were going on between Syrian Democratic Forces and ISIS.

In northwest Syria, from April 26 to the end of the year, Syrian-Russian alliance forces launched coordinated attacks on the Idlib region, which is home to nearly 3 million people; this caused hundreds of civilian casualties and [extensive destruction](#) to infrastructure that was already barely meeting the requirements of the people of the region; indiscriminate shelling was accompanied by incursions and control of the villages of southern suburbs of Idlib, southeastern suburbs of Idlib and northern suburbs of Hama, all of which caused the displacement of at least 700,000 people, including 300,000 people who were displaced during the last two weeks of 2019 alone.





In the northern areas, in particular east of the Euphrates River, the Operation Peace Spring caused a mass displacement from the areas near the Syrian-Turkish border, some of whose residents had not previously been displaced, such as al Malekiya area north of Hasaka governorate. The number of displaced people in north-eastern Syria, according to [the United Nations Office](#) for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is nearly 200,000, some of whom have returned after the military operations, while an estimated 70,000 people still live in camps that lack the most basic necessities of life.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimates that nearly one million people were subjected to forced displacement in 2019, 70 percent of whom were displaced as a result of military operations launched by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

## V. Most Prominent Political and Military Events in 2019

### **Political events**

- On January 23, [the Russian and Turkish Presidents met in the Russian capital](#), Moscow for discussions on the situation in the fourth de-escalation zone and the formation of a Constitutional Committee.
- On February 14, the fourth tripartite summit was held, which brought together the heads of state of Russia, [Turkey and Iran in the Russian city of Sochi](#). In the summit's closing statement, the three heads of state stressed several points, the most important of which was the need to intensify efforts to launch the work of the Constitutional Committee in Syria, the need to create conditions for the return of Syrian refugees, and the need to continue to fight terrorism throughout Syria, while intensifying efforts to implement the ceasefire agreement in Idlib governorate.
- On February 27, [Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) confirmed that all foreign forces would withdraw from Syria, and stated that he was discussing the idea of forming a working group concerning this issue, after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who stressed the importance of the exit of Iranians from Syrian territory.
- April 25 - 27, the [12th round of the Astana](#) conference was held in the Kazakh capital, Nursultan (Astana), with the talks concluding amid continued hints from the Syrian regime and its Iranian ally that they would be launching military operations in Idlib governorate in northern Syria.



- In April, the Syrian regime's government [announced](#) an agreement to lease the port of Tartous to Russia for a period of 49 years; the agreement stipulated that Moscow would assume the tasks of expanding the port and updating its capabilities for use for economic and logistical purposes. The port of Tartous is one of the largest ports in Syria, occupying an area of 3 million square meters.
- On May 10, the Security Council held an emergency closed-door meeting at the invitation of Germany, Kuwait and Belgium. The Deputy Russian Ambassador to the United Nations, Vladimir Safronkov, subsequently announced that Russia had [obstructed](#) the release of a statement at the end of the meeting. The meeting did not issue any action or even a condemnation of the killings, bombardment, displacement and targeting of medical facilities.
- On May 13, the governments of the United Kingdom, France and Germany expressed in [a statement](#) their concern at the escalation of hostilities in northwestern Syria and urged all parties to avoid any military offensive in the region and to abide by their commitments to de-escalate violence in Idlib.
- On May 17, the Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in northern Syria, at the invitation of Kuwait, Germany and Belgium. Rosemary Dicarolo, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding and Political Affairs, warned in [her briefing](#) against the consequences of continued hostilities in northern Syria. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefed the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in northwestern Syria, concluding with the question: What is the point of the Security Council passing resolutions like that if States are not going to comply with them?
- On May 24, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued [its third report](#) on the situation in northwest Syria for the period from April 28 to May 24, stating that 20 medical facilities had been affected by the conflict, two of them more than once. The report highlighted the need to increase the number of mobile clinics to serve the displaced.
- On June 11, [the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2474](#), which calls on all parties to armed conflict to take all appropriate measures, to actively search for persons reported missing, to enable the return of their remains and to account for persons reported missing "without adverse distinction".



- On June 13, after the Russian Defense Ministry announced that a ceasefire agreement had been established through the mediation of Russia and Turkey at 00:00 on June 12, the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu [stated](#) at a joint news conference held with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian at the Turkish Foreign Ministry headquarters in Ankara: “It is not possible to say there is a complete cease-fire in Syria’s Idlib at the moment.”
- On June 27, the European Union, [in a statement](#) issued by European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, expressed deep concern over the attacks of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the fourth de-escalation zone and condemned the targeting of civilians, hospitals and schools.
- On July 12, 2019, [the Russian Embassy in The Hague held a press conference](#) at which it sought to distort and deny the facts of the use of chlorine gas in the Douma attack; [Russian officials presented](#) some testimonies of local residents in the city, which challenges the OPCW report that confirmed the use of poison gases in the city on April 7, 2018.
- On July 26, the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet issued [a press statement](#) in which she expressed her concern that the continued carnage in Syria “is no longer on the international radar,” concluding her statement by saying: “Influential parties, including those that agreed to reduce hostilities as part of the de-escalation agreement, should urgently use their influence to halt the current military campaign and bring the warring parties back to the negotiating table.” In addition, the High Commissioner asserted, “It is essential that there is a cessation of hostilities in order to give the on-going political negotiations room to breathe. The alternative is just more mindless death and destruction in a war without end.”
- On July 26, the OCHA issued [its eighth report](#) on the human rights situation in Syria, which outlined some of the killing incidents in the area. The report said that the United Nations possesses satellite imagery demonstrating that at least 16 out of 27 assessed communities have been almost completely destroyed as a result of the recent military operations.



- On July 29, the Chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Colonel General Sergei Rudskoy, held a press [conference](#) in which he emphasized that: “The Russian Aerospace Forces grouping in Syria, which conducts operational and combat training activities, is in readiness to perform tasks to counter terrorism. Aviation flights have been reduced to a minimum number as part of combat training and additional reconnaissance.”
- On Friday, August 2, the [meetings of the 13th round of the “Astana”](#) talks on Syria concluded; the guarantor countries agreed to take concrete measures to prevent civilian casualties in the de-escalation zone in Idlib, and to ensure the safety of the military personnel of the guarantor countries.
- On September 16, a tripartite summit was held between [the heads of state of Turkey, Russia and Iran in the Turkish capital](#), Ankara, at which they agreed on the necessity of eliminating terrorist groups in Syria, achieving stability in Idlib, and continuing the Astana peace process to reach a political solution in Syria. They reaffirmed their determination to ensure calm on the ground through the implementation of all elements of the Idlib agreements, in particular the September 17, 2018 memo (Sochi Agreement to stabilize de-escalation).
- On September 19, Russia and China [vetoed](#) a Security Council resolution, drafted by Belgium, Germany and Kuwait, with 12 states voting in favour to impose an immediate ceasefire in Idlib governorate in northwest Syria. Also, a draft resolution submitted by Russia and China to the Security Council concerning fears of terrorism by extremist groups was rejected by nine countries, with four abstentions.
- On Monday, September 23, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres [announced](#) at a press conference held at the UN’s permanent headquarters in New York that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Negotiations Commission had agreed to establish a supposedly credible, balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee facilitated by the United Nations in Geneva as part of the political process to end the conflict ongoing since 2011; [a letter from](#) the UN Secretary-General addressed to the Security Council on September 27 clarified the terms of reference and Rules of Procedure of this Committee.



- On September 26, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo [announced](#) that US government investigations had concluded that: “The Syrian regime recently used chemical weapons in al Kbaina village in the eastern suburbs of Latakia in May 2019.”
- On Tuesday, October 22, [Sochi city hosted a Turkish-Russian summit](#) that reached a [10-point agreement](#) on the withdrawal of the terrorist ‘YPG’ organization - the People’s Protection Units - with its weapons from the Turkish border to a distance of 30 km inside Syria, within 150 hours.
- On October 30, 2019, the [meetings of the Constitutional Committee Large Body](#) were launched, with the committee consisting of 150 members (50 of them from the Syrian government, 50 members representing the opposition and 50 representatives of civil society organizations selected by the UN envoy’s office.)
- On November 1, at the conclusion of the meetings of the Constitutional Committee Large Body, Mr. Pedersen [announced](#) an agreement on the formation of the Syrian Constitutional Committee Small Body, consisting of 45 members (15 of each party) which would set about preparing and drafting a constitutional reform document for public approval, as a contribution to the political settlement in Syria and to the implementation of [Security Council resolution 2254](#).
- The first meeting of the Constitutional Committee Small Body was held on November 4, lasting for a week; at the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Geir O. Pedersen in [a press conference](#) that the Committee had discussed many important issues, the foremost of which were the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, in addition to continuing the fight against terrorism, pointing out that the discussions were professional and successful.
- In a press conference held on November 29 at the conclusion of the second round of meetings, the UN envoy to Syria [announced](#) the failure of the parties of the Syrian Constitutional Committee to reach an agreement, stating: “We have just concluded the second session of the Constitutional Committee; it was not possible to call for a meeting for the Small Body of 45 because there has been no agreement on the agenda.”



- On Thursday, December 5, [French President Emmanuel Macron](#) stated at a press conference following the NATO summit in the British capital, London, that a new quartet summit on Syria and Libya would take place during the first three months of next year, between the leaders of Turkey, France, Germany and Britain.
- On the 10th and 11th of December, the 14th [meeting](#) of the guarantors of the Astana peace process on Syria was launched in the Kazakh capital, Nursultan (Astana), with the participation of Turkey, Russia, Iran, the Syrian regime, and a delegation from the Syrian opposition; Turkey, Russia, and Iran agreed to implement their understandings regarding the situation in Idlib governorate (northwestern Syria), establishing stability in the northeast of the country, rejecting separatist aspirations, and fighting against what they described as extremists.
- On December 18, Ms. Najat Rochdi, Senior Humanitarian Adviser to the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, [condemned](#) the intensification of hostilities in northwest Syria, in particular aerial bombardments and the reported use of barrel bombs, killing dozens of civilians including women and children.
- On December 20, Russia and China [vetoed](#) a Security Council draft resolution drafted by Germany, Belgium, and Kuwait to transport United Nations aid through Iraqi border points to four million Syrians for a year.
- On December 23, the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General [emphasized](#) the Secretary-General's concern about the military escalation in northwest Syria and reiterated his call for an immediate cessation of hostilities.
- On December 28, the meetings of the independent representatives in the Syrian opposition Negotiation Commission [concluded](#) in the Saudi capital, Riyadh; during the conference, eight members were elected to represent the independents in the Negotiation Commission. A general secretariat and reference body composed of 13 members were elected, with all participants being classified as members of a public body.

### **The military events**

- On January 10, [the Hay'at Tahrir al Sham group took control of most of Idlib governorate](#), and forced factions of the Armed Opposition to accept an agreement to hand over civil control of the area to an administration supported by HTS.



- On Sunday, March 24, [dozens of ISIS fighters](#) surrendered to the SDF after their exit from al Baghouz town in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour; Syrian Democratic Forces [announced](#) on Saturday, March 23, their control of the last ISIS enclave in al Baghouz town, after six months of a large-scale attack they began in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour with support from the US-led coalition.
- On Saturday, May 4, factions of the Armed Opposition supported by Turkish forces [took control](#) of al Malekiya and the villages of shawargha and al Arz in the northern suburbs of Aleppo after battles with the SDF.
- On Thursday, May 9, Syrian Regime forces and affiliated militias [took control](#) of Qal'at al Madiq town in the northern suburbs of Hama, after battles with Armed Opposition forces.
- On June 12, the Russian Defense Ministry [announced](#) in a briefing from the Russian Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria that a ceasefire agreement had been established through the mediation of Russia and Turkey at 00:00 on June 12. Hours later, Russia accused factions of the Armed Opposition of violating the agreement and carrying out an artillery attack on a Turkish observation post in the Jabal al Zaweya area on the night of June 12-13.
- [On June 27](#), the tenth Turkish observation post in the fourth de-escalation zone came under a Russian air attack, and Syrian Regime forces attacked the same post two days later on [June 29](#), according to the Turkish Ministry of Defense.
- On Thursday, August 1, the Syrian regime [announced](#) that a conditional ceasefire had taken effect in Idlib; the Syrian News Agency 'SANA' quoted a military source in the regime forces as stating that a ceasefire had been agreed in the de-escalation zone in Idlib in the north of the country as of midnight the same night. The agency further quoted the military source as saying that approval had been given subject to the application of the Sochi Agreement, which provides for the retreat of fighters of the Syrian armed opposition 20 km in the depth from the line of the de-escalation zone in Idlib, in addition to the withdrawal of heavy and medium weapons.
- On August 21, Syrian Regime forces and affiliated militias [took control](#) of the strategic city of Khan Sheikhoun in the south of Idlib governorate, located on the "M5" Road, after several months of battles.



- On August 24, Israeli attacks took place on Iranian forces near Damascus; Israel [announced](#) that Iranian forces were “planning to launch a drone that was aiming at targets in Israel. “
- On Friday, August 30, the Russian army [announced](#) a ‘unilateral’ ceasefire in Idlib starting the following morning. The announcement came in a statement issued by the Russian Center for Reconciliation in Syria, which claimed that an agreement had been reached “for a unilateral ceasefire by Syrian government forces as of 06:00 August 31. “
- On September 11, [factions of the Armed Opposition reported that Moscow-backed forces](#) were mobilizing fighters in preparation for a resumption of an attack in northwestern Syria, after aircraft believed to be Russian carried out raids for a second day, threatening the end of a fragile ceasefire.
- On October 9, at around 4:00 p.m., Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [announced](#) the start of the military operation ‘Peace Spring’, led by the Turkish army and the Syrian National Army forces against Syrian Democratic Forces along the Syrian-Turkish border from Ein al Arab / Kobani city in Aleppo suburbs to al Malekiya city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka.
- On October 12, the Turkish Ministry of Defense [announced that it had taken control](#) of the Syrian city of Ras al Ein, as a result of the ongoing successful operations within the framework of Operation Peace Spring.
- On Sunday, October 13, the Turkish Ministry of Defense [announced](#) that its forces had taken control of the M4 highway with a depth of between 30 and 35 kilometers inside Syrian territory, after it took control of Tal Abyad city in northeastern Syria.
- On October 16, the Russian [Military Police conducted](#) their first patrols in Manbej city, in northern Syria, after the withdrawal of US forces.
- On October 22, the end of Operation Peace Spring [was announced](#) following the meeting between the Turkish and Russian Presidents in the Russian city of Sochi. The agreement issued by this meeting included several items.





- On October 27, US President Donald Trump [announced](#) that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi had been killed in an attack launched by US Special Forces in northwestern Syria.
- On November 20, the Israeli army [announced](#) that it had launched “large-scale” air strikes on military sites in Damascus on Wednesday in response to rocket fire from Syria towards Israel the previous day.
- On Monday, December 9, the Russian Ministry of Defense [announced](#) that its military units had entered Raqqa city for the first time since the start of the direct Russian military presence in Syria in the fall of 2015.
- On Thursday, December 12, the Turkish Ministry of Defense [announced](#) that it has deployed 41 observation posts on the road between the areas of Tal Abyad in Raqqa suburbs and Ras al Ein in Hasaka suburbs.
- On Sunday, December 15, [US forces sent](#) new military reinforcements to the oil fields areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces. The US forces entered the Syrian governorate of Deir Ez-Zour from the al Walid border crossing with Iraq, heading to the oil borders south of Hasaka governorate.
- On Tuesday, December 17, the Russian army finished testing the second stage of the fifth-generation ‘SU-57’ fighter jet during its operations in Syria.

The Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, [said](#) that the fifth-generation fighter “SU-57” had passed all stages of the “attack” test in Syria, and had successfully carried out all the planned tasks.

- On Tuesday, December 24, the Syrian regime army [announced](#) that the lands that it seized in the recent campaign in northwestern Syria covered an area of more than 320 square kilometers, as they took control of more than forty cities and villages in the south-eastern areas of Idlib governorate.
- On December 29, [the United States targeted five facilities of Kata’ib Hizbollah \(KH\)](#), two of which were in Syria, in response to the targeting of Iraqi bases that host Operation Inherent Resolve by KH.



## VI. Road to Accountability; Failure to Hold the Syrian Regime Accountable Encouraged Countries in the world to Normalizing Relationship with It:

### **A: Illegal and unethical attempts to rehabilitate the Syrian regime in its current form and restore its previous status in the Arab League and the international community:**

The past year has witnessed an increase in international efforts to promote and normalize the Syrian regime and to restore political, diplomatic and economic relations with it, all of which constitute an implied approval of its horrendous, still ongoing crimes against the Syrian people, sending a clear message of contempt for the values of dignity and democracy and establishing a state of hatred and distrust amongst its millions of victims, as well as entrenching instability like to last for decades. These apparent moves towards whitewashing and excusing the regime's innumerable crimes against humanity symbolize an abandonment of fundamental principles and moral values by the international community and a willful blindness to innumerable atrocities.

- On Friday, January 17, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, [said](#) that Syria's return to its seat in the League would be conditional on an Arab consensus, adding, "It must be recognized that Syria is an Arab country that is a founder of the Arab League."
- On Saturday, April 20, Iraq [hosted](#) a summit of heads of parliaments in which representatives from six neighboring countries participated, including the Speaker of the Syrian People's Assembly.
- On Thursday, August 29, a delegation of at least 40 Emirati businessmen [participated](#) in a trade exhibition supported by the Syrian regime in Damascus, in defiance of US warnings against engaging in commercial activities with the government of President Bashar al Assad and its partners.
- On Friday, September 27, the Iraqi News Agency said that Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi [agreed](#) to open the al Qa'im border crossing with Syria, in the latest sign of the normalization of relations between Baghdad and the Syrian government.



- On Monday, December 2, the UAE embassy in Damascus [celebrated](#) the country's [National Day in the presence](#) of most of the accredited Arab and international diplomatic corps in the Syrian capital. The UAE's Chargé d'Affaires said in a speech he delivered at the celebration that he wished security and safety for Syria under Bashar al Assad's "wise leadership" of the country, praising al-Assad for this "wise leadership. "

### **B: Limited attempts to prosecute the perpetrators:**

Russia's protection and care for the Syrian regime, in particular through the use of its veto, have provided effectively unlimited protection for the Syrian regime to commit literally any crimes to any level, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. This conferring of carte blanche has established a culture of impunity in the Syrian conflict, as well as encouraging the other parties to the conflict to commit violations. There can be no doubt that the failure to prosecute the Syrian regime after the terrifying levels of criminality it has been given impunity to perpetrate, and even in many cases the normalization of relations with the regime as if it had done no wrong, are a nadir in modern history unparalleled since the appeasement of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and a dark stain on humanity, or that this appeasement will encourage other tyrannical, authoritarian and genocidal regimes to commit crimes similar to those perpetrated by the Syrian regime in the knowledge that they will face no penalties for doing so.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights continues to call for multiple forms of accountability, not just limited to judicial issues despite the SNHR's participation, and emphasizing their importance; however, this is a lengthy process that may take years, with the regime's violations not ending during that period. Therefore, there must be an expansion of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court to include mass atrocity crimes (War crimes, crimes against humanity, extermination), even in cases when there is no referral from the Security Council, for countries that have not ratified the court's charter, including broad economic sanctions against the supporters of the Syrian regime, at the forefront of which are arms companies, banks and Russian companies. There must also be a provision of safe zones to protect people from air strikes.

In 2019, in particular, some limited steps were taken towards this process, the most important of which are:

- On January 17, the European Union [prepared](#) to impose new sanctions on figures and entities of the Syrian regime.
- On January 23, the US Treasury listed on its blacklist of [sanctions](#) Syrian businessman Samer Fouz, members of his family and his business empire for his support of the Syrian regime and its facilitation of Iranian oil imports.



- On Thursday, February 7, the Antwerp Court' acting as a part of the Belgian Justice system, [issued](#) a ruling against three companies that contributed to the supply of materials which are part of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons industry, with sentences for those convicted ranging from fines to imprisonment.
- On Tuesday, February 12, the [French Public Prosecutor confirmed](#) the arrest of a Syrian man in the French capital, Paris, in relation to investigations into crimes against humanity. The French prosecution indicated that there was coordination with the German authorities in this case, who also arrested two former Syrian intelligence officials.
- On Wednesday, February 13, [the German Public Prosecutor issued](#) an arrest warrant for two former Syrian intelligence officials for crimes against humanity, who were arrested in the states of Berlin and Rhineland-Palatinate; the two were identified as Anwar Raslan, the head of an investigation department in Branch 251, State Security, "Khatib Branch" and one of his subordinates, named only as Eyad. A. The charge against the two is carrying out mass torture and physical abuse against dissidents with suspicions that crimes against humanity were committed.
- On Monday, February 18, [German authorities officially demand](#) that Lebanon hand over "Jamil Al-Hassan", the head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence Service, according to the arrest warrant issued against him by the German Public Prosecutor regarding crimes against humanity. The request came after information about Al-Hassan's presence in Lebanon for medical treatment.
- On March 4, the European Union adds seven of the Syrian regime's government ministers to the list of [sanctions](#) that included the individuals and organizations against whom restrictive measures were issued against those close to and cooperating with the Syrian regime, with the sanctions related to travel bans and asset freezes.
- On Friday, March 8, Catherine Marchi-Uhel, the head of a United Nations committee investigating war crimes in Syria, [said](#) that "international investigators are closer than ever to achieving justice for victims of atrocities in the eight-year-old Syrian war, which killed hundreds of thousands", adding that her office had "received 15 requests from national judicial bodies to cooperate in cases related to Syria in five countries and collected a million records in total."

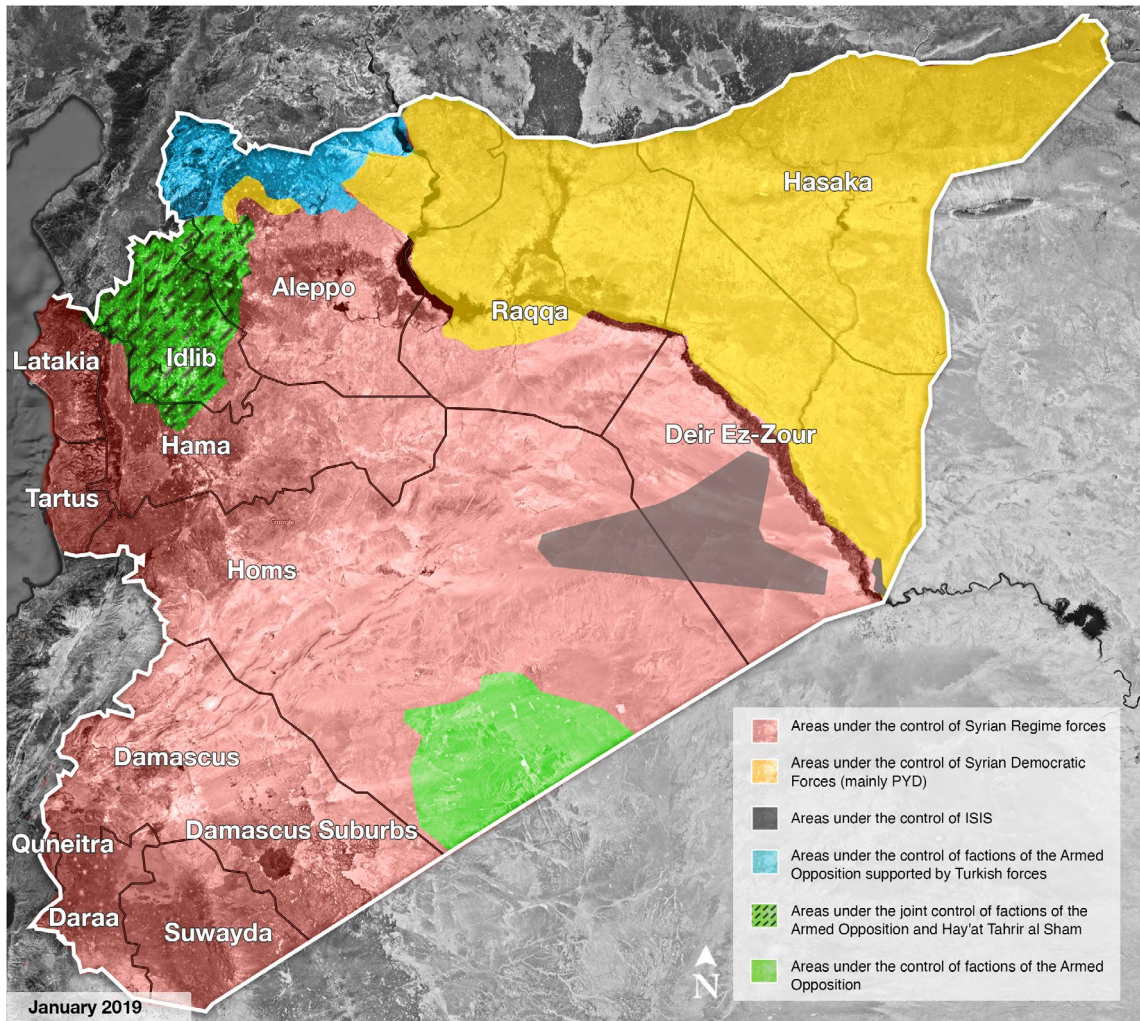


- On Thursday, May 16, Swedish judicial authorities officially [began](#) investigating a case filed in Stockholm last February against 25 high-ranking figures in the Syrian regime's security services by nine survivors of detention and torture in the regime's prisons.
- On Friday, July 12, [the Director-General of the Organization](#) for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons announced that its investigators, charged with identifying those responsible for chemical attacks in Syria, have prepared a list of the first investigations they will carry out.
- On Tuesday, July 30, diplomats said that two-thirds of the members of the United Nations Security Council, including the United States, Britain and France, had asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, to investigate attacks against UN-supported medical facilities in northwestern Syria.
- On Friday, September 27, the French Foreign Ministry [said](#) that any use of chemical weapons in Syria should be highlighted and that it was "concerned to be made aware" of information from the United States about the use of these weapons in Syria last May.
- On Tuesday, December 17, the US Senate approved - within the Defense Department's budget for 2020 - the "Caesar" Law to Protect Civilians in Syria, which provides for sanctions against the Syrian regime and its supporters, with the US President later signing it into law.

## VII. Shifts in Areas of Control in 2019

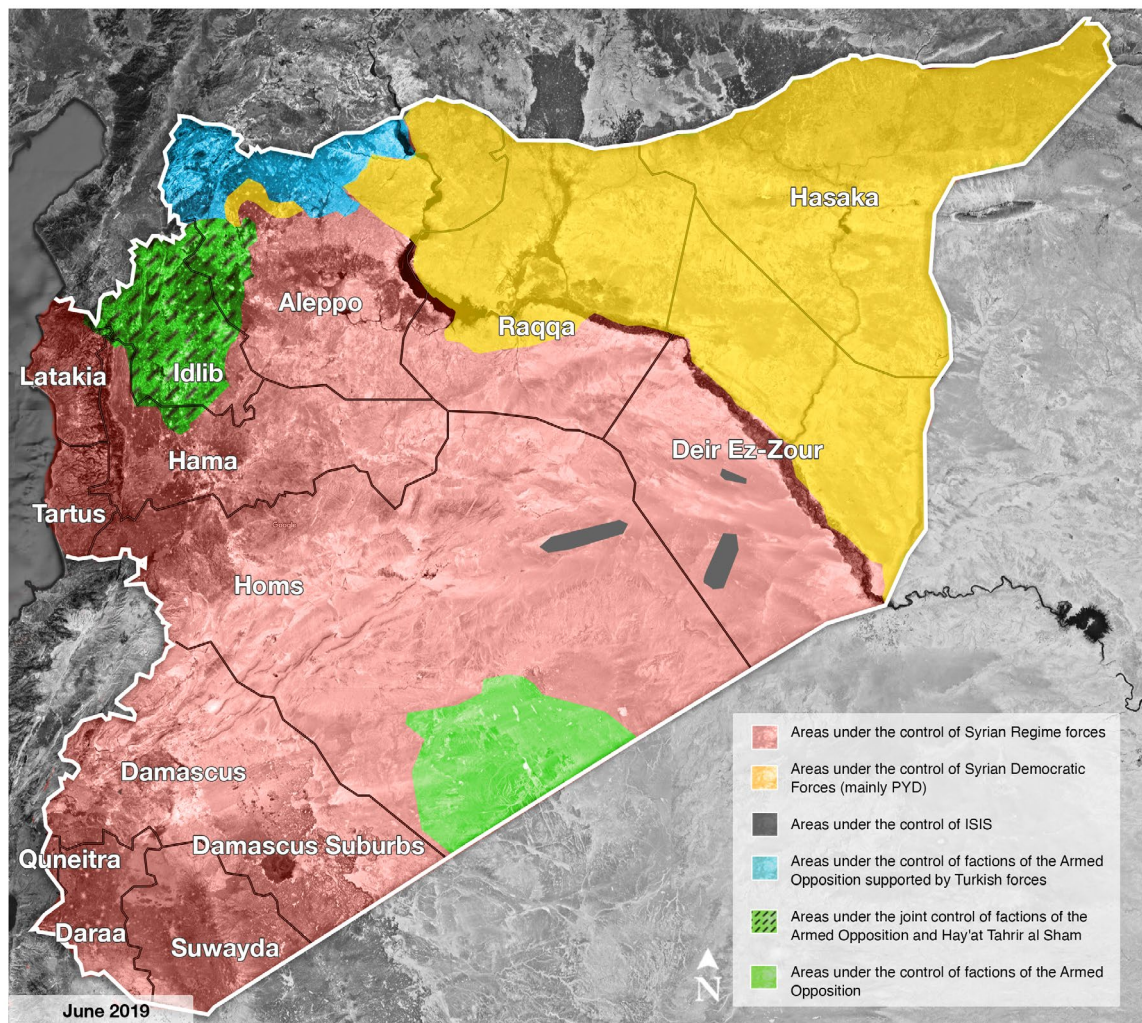
At the beginning of 2019, Syrian Regime forces controlled about 60 percent of the total Syrian territory after taking control of the third de-escalation zone in southern Syria (parts of the governorates of Daraa and Quneitra), while the Syrian Democratic Forces controlled approximately 29 percent, and ISIS's control had diminished to less than 1 percent, with the remaining estimated 10 percent of Syria being shared by both factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.





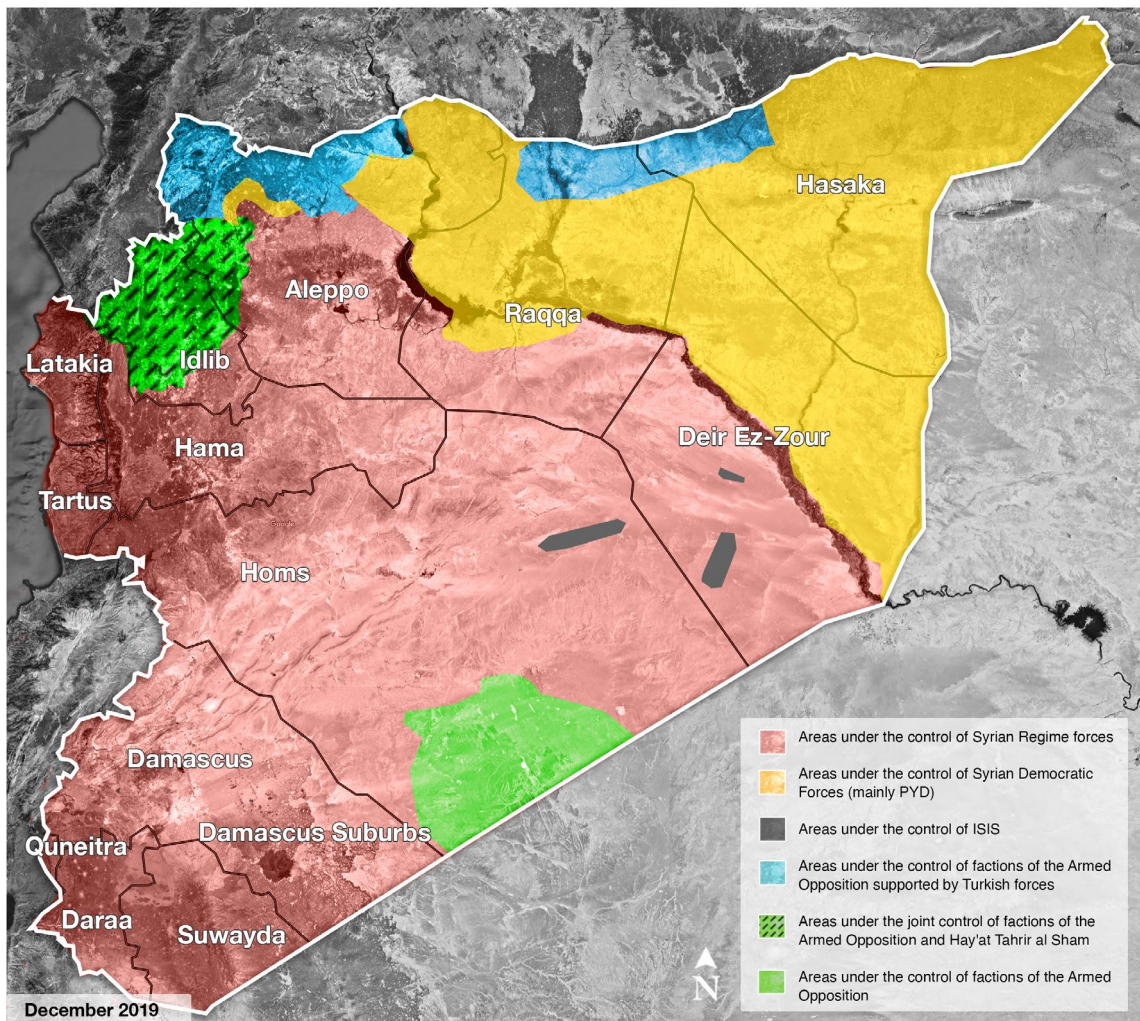
In mid-2019, Syrian Regime forces, with the support of Iranian militias and Russian forces, began their military campaign against the Idlib region; by the end of August 2019, they had managed to expand their control over the southern sector of the last de-escalation zone, and extended their control over the cities of Khan Sheikhoun, al Latamena, and Kafr Zita, thus extending the total area under their control to nearly 61.7 percent of Syrian territory, while Syrian Democratic Forces managed in March 2019 to completely control Hajin enclave, announcing the end of ISIS, although ISIS still maintains a minor presence in the form of cells spread in some areas of the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour.





By the end of 2019, Syrian Regime forces had expanded their control over some villages and towns in the southeastern suburbs of Idlib, taking control of Jarjanaz town and reaching the outskirts of Ma'aret al Numan city, increasing the percentage of Syrian territory under their control to approximately 62 percent, while the area controlled by Armed Opposition factions expanded following the launch of Operation Peace Spring with the support of Turkish forces. This meant that while villages and towns east of the Euphrates remained under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, the percentage of territory controlled by the Armed Opposition factions rose slightly to approximately 12 percent, while the area controlled by the SDF was reduced to approximately 26 percent.





## VIII. Report details

### A: The Syrian regime (security, army, local militias, and foreign Shiite militias):

#### 1. Violations related to the treatment of civilians and hors de combat fighters

##### A: Massacres and other acts of unlawful killings:

From the beginning of 2019 on Monday, January 1, 2019, to the end of 2019 at the time of compiling this report, the SNHR documented the deaths of 1,497 civilians, including 371 children and 224 women (adult female), as well 43 massacres, at the hands of Syrian Regime forces.

The total percentage of women and children among the total number of civilian victims is 40 percent. This is a clear indication that Syrian Regime forces have deliberately targeted civilians through indiscriminate shelling and executions.





In 2018, Syrian Regime forces killed 4,162 civilians, including 713 children and 562 women (adult female), and committed 130 massacres according to the SNHR archive.

On Saturday, February 9, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used artillery to fire a number of shells at al Sharqi neighborhood of Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of [six civilians](#) from [one family](#), including [three children](#) (one male and two females) and two women. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, April 7, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a missile carrying cluster munitions that landed in front of the local council building in al Gharbi neighborhood in Saraqeb city in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in [the deaths](#) of six civilians at once, including [one woman](#), and [injured](#) approximately 15 others. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Monday, May 27, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles at a residential neighborhood in the center of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles landed on two residential buildings about 30 meters away from the Ariha School for Girls, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [12 civilians](#), including [four children \(two males and two females\)](#) and seven women, and injuring about 30 others. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Child victims of a massacre committed in an air attack by the Syrian regime on Ariha city, Idlib - May 27, 2019



On Tuesday, May 28, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles at a public street in the middle of Kafr Halab village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [resulting](#) in [the deaths](#) of [10 civilians](#), [including four children](#) (three males and one female) and one woman. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Monday, June 10, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian Regime warplanes fired missiles at a residential neighborhood in middle of Jabala village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting](#) in the deaths of at least [13 civilians](#), including [seven children](#) (six males and one female) and [two women](#). Jabala village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, July 21, 2019, fixed-wing (SU-24) Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles that landed [in front of al Eman Mosque](#) in al Karaj area in the center of Urm al Jawz village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting](#) in [the deaths](#) of [10 civilians](#), including [three children](#) (two males and one female) and one woman, and injured 22 others. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, August 28, 2019, at around 19:00, fixed-wing (Su-24) Syrian regime war-planes, which took off from al Seen Airbase in the suburbs of Homs governorate at around 18:35, fired about ten missiles simultaneously at Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles landed on houses in Shairout neighborhood in the center of the city in close proximity to each other within a radius of approximately 300 meters in diameter, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [13 civilians](#), including [six children](#) (males) and [two women](#), and injuring about [20 others](#), in addition to causing extensive destruction to more than 30 houses. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Thursday, October 24, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a missile at al Hal market in the middle of al Janoudiya town, which is administratively a part of Jisr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of [eight civilians](#) at once. Al Janoudiya town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

## **B: Arbitrary Arrest and Unlawful Detention:**

Arbitrary arrests by Syrian Regime forces in 2019 targeted refugees and IDPs returning to their areas of origin. We recorded regular arrests of refugees and IDPs returnees who had made official settlements of their security status with the regime through committees and consulates, and had received promises in return that they would not be arrested on their



return; in spite of these promises, they were arrested, disappeared, tortured and/or forced to join compulsory and reserve military service without the regime committing to the time limit granted to them upon settlement, which is between 3 - 6 months from their return. In this regard, we issued a [detailed report](#) on the most notable violations by Syrian Regime forces against returning refugees and IDPs.

The arrests have also been concentrated in the areas that saw reconciliations and settlements with Syrian Regime forces, targeting all individuals who had been active in the popular uprising and had worked for factions of the Armed Opposition, civil society organizations, local councils, along with other activists, all of whom had made official settlements of their security status; these arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Daraa, Damascus Suburbs, Homs, and Quneitra. Civilians in these areas were also subjected to arrest campaigns, with the aim of conscripting them for military service.

Since the beginning of 2019, we have recorded many cases of arrests, whose victims included women and children, that took place in the context of civilians travelling between the areas controlled by Armed Opposition factions and Syrian Regime forces. We also recorded cases of arrests that occurred in relation to citizens making phone calls to areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, in addition to arrests targeting media workers, writers, and playwrights, in the context of expressing unfavorable opinions about the Syrian regime and criticizing the living and economic situation in areas under Syrian regime control, through social media.

The SNHR documented the arrest of at least 2,797 individuals, including 113 children and 125 women (adult female) by Syrian Regime forces in 2019, 1,290 of whom were released, with many others forcibly conscripted into military service, and at least 1,507 individuals, including 66 children and 83 women, who were classified as forcibly disappeared. Meanwhile we also documented the arrest of 5,607 individuals, including 355 children and 596 women (adult female) by Syrian Regime forces in 2018. This decrease in the numbers of arrests officially documented is due to increasing difficulties in documentation and verification in the areas under the control of the Syrian regime, which has re-established its brutal security grip on those areas, with the population there fearful of reporting and documenting violations, for fear of being subjected to prosecutions and threats by Syrian Regime forces.



[Kamal Saltali al Qaderi](#) from Um al Mayathen village in eastern Daraa governorate, who formerly worked as the director of the Syrian Civil Defense' eastern section in Daraa governorate, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on August 17, 2019, at Damascus International Airport upon his return from the United Arab Emirates. We note that Kamal was among those who had previously settled his status with the Syrian regime. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR.

[Rakan Tawfiq al Safadi](#), a Syrian poet and researcher, holds a PhD in Abbasid literature from Damascus University. Born in 1962, Rakan, from al Ghariya village in the southern suburbs of Suwayda governorate, is a university professor at al Qalamoun University in Deir Atteya town in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On August 26, 2019, Syrian Regime forces arrested him while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints at the entrance to Damascus city, releasing him five days later on Saturday, August 31, 2019.

[Ayham al Shahbani](#), known as Abu al Yaman, a former Imam and preacher at al Nour Mosque in Seyda town in the east of Daraa governorate, from Ibta' town in the north of Daraa governorate, was arrested on Thursday, September 5, 2019, by Syrian Regime forces in a raid on his house in Ibta' town, being released 15 days later on Friday, September 20, 2019.

Dr. Bassam Swaidan and paramedic Hayyan Swaidan, brothers, from Daraa city, who were working in the former Daraa al Balad field hospital in Daraa city, were arrested by members of the Syrian regime's Air Security Force on Wednesday, September 25, 2019, in Aleppo governorate, while they were on their way from Daraa city to areas controlled by factions of the Armed Opposition in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, releasing them almost three weeks later on Tuesday, October 15, 2019

Mustafa Hamdan al Khalaf, a 70-year-old doctor specializing in internal diseases, from al Sheikh Maskin city in northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested on Monday, October 7, 2019, by members of the Syrian regime's Air Security Force in a raid on his house in al Sheikh Maskin city, and taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR.



### **C. Torture inside Detention Centers:**

Detainees in detention centers are subjected to multiple types of physical, psychological and sexual torture acts using a wide variety of methods that begin from the first moment of their arrest and continue throughout the duration of their detention; these detentions often turn into enforced disappearances that last for many years, with the authorities denying any knowledge of the prisoners' detention, and preventing them from communicating with their families or appointing lawyers; we were able to document 72 methods of torture that the Syrian regime continues to practice in its detention centers and military hospitals, outlining them in a [detailed report](#); we are still investigating new methods of torture reportedly adopted by the regime that we did not include in the previous report.

In 2019, the Syrian regime continued to register previously disappeared persons as dead at civil registry departments, in all Syrian governorates; the victims' families with whom we communicated confirmed to us that their loved ones had died due to torture and medical negligence. In two previous detailed reports, we explained the procedural details involved in registering the death of disappeared persons with the regime's civil registry departments, the traumatic suffering endured by the victims' parents, spouses and families during their detention, and how they learned about the death of their children or loved ones. In addition to these operations, hardly a day passes without SNHR documenting at least one incident of death, on average, among those arrested or forcibly disappeared in the Syrian regime's official and unofficial detention centers, with some of the victims who were arrested in 2018 or 2019 having been among those who had officially settled their security status with the regime in those areas that saw settlements.

In 2019, the SNHR documented the deaths of at least 275 individuals due to torture by Syrian Regime forces, compared to 951 individuals, including 11 children and two women (adult female) who died due to torture by Syrian Regime forces in 2018.

[Ghiath Zuhair M'adammani](#), a media activist and member of the Daraya Media Council Office, from Daraya city, west of Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1987, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with Syrian Regime forces on Wednesday, August 20, 2014, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints as he was trying to leave his city Daraya during the siege imposed by Syrian Regime forces on the city. On Tuesday, January 1, 2019, we learned that he had been registered at the civil registry department as having died on Monday, May 4, 2015; we consider it most probable that he died due to torture in one of the Syrian Regime's detention centers.



[Bilal Abdul Kafi al Mohammad](#), nicknamed “Abu Orouba’, a media activist and one of the founders of the ‘Syria Revolutionaries Gathering’ group, from Talthahab town in the north of Homs governorate, born in 1986, was married with a child. He was arrested on Wednesday, August 28, 2013, by Syrian Regime forces while he was passing through a regime checkpoint in Kfarraa village in the northeast of Hama governorate, and taken to the Military Security branch in Hama city before being taken to Damascus city. On Sunday, February 3, 2019, we learned that he had been registered as dead at the civil registry department. We consider it most probable that he died due to torture in one of the Syrian Regime’s detention centers.

[Abdullah Mazen al Saud](#), a student of sociology at the Faculty of Arts at Aleppo University, from Ma’aret al Numan city in the south of Idlib governorate, was born in 1989. He was arrested on Tuesday, February 21, 2012, by Syrian Regime forces as he was passing through a regime checkpoint near al Ahram Gas Station on Aleppo International Road. On Saturday, April 6, 2019, we learned that he had been registered in the civil register department as having died on April 15, 2014. We consider it most probable that he died due to torture in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate.

[Dr. Osama Omar al Khaled](#), a 64-year-old general practitioner of Palestinian-Syrian nationality, was a resident of al Shajara town in the west of Daraa governorate. He was arrested on Friday, August 3, 2018, by Syrian Regime forces while he was in Ma’raba IDPs Camp in Hawd al Yarmouk area in the west of Daraa governorate, and taken to the Raid Branch prison in Damascus city. On Monday, November 25, 2019, he died due to medical negligence in Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate after he had been transferred to a hospital in Damascus city.

#### **D. Sexual Violence:**

The Syrian regime practiced sexual violence against males and females in its detention centers. In 2019, we documented incidents of sexual violence against adult females within a detention center in Damascus city, where detainees were forced to undress completely during inspection, as well as other incidents at a checkpoint in Aleppo Governorate, where the victim was subjected to harassment by security members during the inspection and verification of travel documents. In general, the security personnel responsible for searches and raids on homes routinely commit physical or verbal sexual harassment of Syrian girls and women, and we have noticed that this phenomenon has become more prevalent and systematic in 2019.



## E. Violations of Children's Rights:

Indiscriminate or deliberate bombardment, especially on residential areas, does not discriminate between children, men or women, with the large number of children killed indicating that residential areas are deliberately targeted with indiscriminate bombardment, with no effort to differentiate between children and adults or any sense of proportionality in the type of attacks.

In 2019, we documented the deaths of at least 371 children at the hands of Syrian Regime forces. As in previous years, the repercussions of the armed conflict in Syria continued to have a profound impact on the present lives and future of the children of Syria, who have been left vulnerable to facing all types of dangers including killing, unlawful detention, enforced disappearance, kidnapping, sexual violence, and conscription, not to mention involving them in combat operations, loss of family, being orphaned, and subjected to injuries, which may sometimes result in amputation or disfigurement of the child's body, in addition to forced displacement and fleeing. The daily bombardment and destruction has damaged at least 1,346 schools since March 2011, excluding more than 3.2 million children in Syria from the educational process. Children's vaccination rates have also declined with the damage to the health sector, in addition to the psychological ramifications and dimensions of all this trauma for Syria's children in the near or long-term future, which are now almost impossible to predict.

You can learn more about this issue in our latest report, [“On the Universal Children's Day: At Least 29,017 Children Have Been Killed in Syria since March 2011,”](#) in which we documented the violations against children in Syria since March 2011.

On Friday, February 22, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a number of missiles at northwestern neighborhoods of Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib governorate: three of the missiles landed in an open area of ground surrounded by homes located near the ancient citadel. At the time of the bombardment children were playing in the open area, with the bombing resulting in [the deaths](#) of [six civilians](#) ([five male children](#) and one woman). The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, July 27, 2019, fixed-wing (MIG-23) Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at neighboring residential buildings in al Gharbi neighborhood of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of [12 civilians](#), including [seven children](#) ([six males](#) and [one female](#)) and [two women](#), in addition to injuring around 27 others with varying injuries. Ariha city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





On Wednesday, November 20, 2019, between 19:45 and 20:00, Syrian Regime forces and Iranian militias, which we believe were stationed in Jabal Azan area in the southern suburbs of Aleppo, used a missile platform to fire a [Tochka 9M79 missile](#) loaded with [9n24 cluster submunitions](#) that fell on Qahh IDP Camp, [resulting in the deaths](#) of [16 civilians](#), including [11 children](#) and [three women \(adult female\)](#), and [injured](#) at least 50 others, in addition to damaging at least 10 of the tents, as well as inflicting damage on the [Maternity Hospital](#), which is supported by the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) and is located 150 meters from Qahh Camp; this hospital is listed among the health facilities included in the [UN humanitarian deconfliction mechanism](#). The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Hamza al Ibrahim, an infant who died due to wounds sustained in a ground attack with a Tochka 9M79 missile fired by Syrian Regime forces on Qahh IDPs Camp, Idlib - November 20, 2019



Visual guid showing six locations in the camp that were subject to varying damages as a result of the attack:



## 2. Violations Concerning the Conduct of Hostilities:

### A. Attacks using outlawed weapons:

#### 1. Artillery and aerial attacks:

Syrian Regime forces have indiscriminately deployed barrel bombs, Scud missiles and other weapons of indiscriminate bombardment throughout the north and south of the country. The Syrian regime's documented use of barrel bombs in 2019 amounted to at least 4,378 barrel bombs, compared to at least 3,601 barrels bombs dropped by the Syrian Regime air force in 2018.

On Friday, July 5, 2019, at round 21:00, two Syrian Regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on three locations in Mhambel town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the deaths of 13 civilians, including seven children, an unborn baby, and three women, and injured 20 others. The civilian death toll was distributed across the three sites as follows:



**The first site:** Some barrel bombs fell on a complex of residential buildings about 200 meters from the Martyr Mohammad Saleh Abdul Aal Primary School in the western outskirts of the town, perpetrating a massacre of seven civilians from one family, including four children (three males and one female) and two women, who were inside the basement of a house.

**The second site:** Barrel bombs fell on residential buildings located in front of [the Martyr Mohammad Saleh Abdul Aal Primary School](#), resulting in the deaths of three civilians, including two children.

**The third site:** Barrel bombs fell on residential buildings located near the [Agricultural Extension building](#) in the northern outskirts of the town, resulting in the deaths of three civilians who were IDPs from Damascus Suburbs governorate, namely a pregnant woman, her child and her unborn baby. Mhambel town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Monday, August 5, 2019, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Morek town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate. One of the barrel bombs fell on a house, resulting in [the deaths](#) of four civilians, [most of whom](#) were members of the same family. We note that the victims had earlier returned from their places of displacement to their hometown after the ceasefire agreement announced by the Russian regime took effect on August 2, 2019. Morek town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, November 14, 2019, Syrian Regime forces' helicopters dropped at least four barrel bombs on an area, known as al Halya area, south of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The Syrian Network for Human Rights obtained exclusive videos documenting the incident. We note that the area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



## 2. Sniper attacks:

Using snipers to kill people within urban environments has the advantage for perpetrators that the sniper can lurk out of victims' sight while observing them closely through the scope of his weapon, and is fully aware of victims' identities before killing them. This is similar to executions, since the murderer in this case knows exactly the characteristics of his victim and deliberately kills him or her, although snipers target people without caring about their victims' identities or distinguishing between men, women or children, or even disabled people, and certainly without knowing the religion of the victim.

In 2019, we recorded the deaths of six civilians, including four children, who were shot dead by government snipers, while in 2018 we recorded the deaths of 29 civilians, including one child and two women, who were shot dead by Syrian regime snipers.

On Thursday, July 18, 2019, two children, Taher Abdul Elah Abu Hawaya, aged three, and Abdullah Yahya Abu Hawaya, aged 15, were shot dead in al Sanamayn city, in the northern suburbs of Daraa, by a sniper affiliated with Syrian Regime forces.

## **B. Individuals and objects under specific protection**

### 1. Hospitals and health sector workers

Syrian Regime forces have continued to target hospitals, medical points, and pharmacies, in addition to repeatedly targeting medical workers, whether through direct killing, torture in prisons, or abduction and restriction. Operations targeting Civil Defense teams, who work to rescue the wounded in areas controlled by factions of the Armed Opposition have increased. All of these factors have driven medical personnel, particularly medical specialists, to flee out of a well-justified fear of being killed, tortured, or forcibly disappeared, which in turn has further overwhelmed the abilities of the few medical personnel who decided to stay; SNHR has documented cases in which veterinarians, dentists, and nurses found themselves forced to conduct surgical operations that require specialists. All of these factors have increasingly worsened the already critical medical situation in general.

In 2019, we documented the deaths of at least 14 medical personnel at the hands of Syrian Regime forces. We also documented at least 55 incidents of attack on hospitals and medical points, while we documented in 2018 the deaths of 33 medical personnel, and at least 60 incidents of attack on hospitals and medical points.



We have noted that Syrian Regime forces deliberately target some medical facilities in a repeated manner with the clear objective of inflicting as much damage as possible to these facilities and denying their services to civilians. We also documented that several vital civilian facilities, which were the last remaining ones in their respective areas, such as the last hospital or school, were deliberately targeted and put out of service by bombardment by Syrian Regime and allied forces on all of these facilities. Attacks of this nature took place in a number of areas.

### **Most notable victims among medical personnel**

[Ahmad Qaddour al Hamwiya](#), a pharmacist from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1987, was in charge of the Need Assessment unit in the Information and Planning Department of 'Free' Hama Health Directorate. He was killed on Saturday, February 16, 2019, when Syrian Regime artillery forces fired a shell at his place of residence in Qal'at al Madiq town in the western suburbs of Hama governorate.

[Mahmoud al Mustafa](#), [Saer Mohammad Bahloul](#) and [Abdul Qader Nahtan](#), from the Violet Organization's Violet Ambulance team, were killed on Thursday, June 20, 2019, when Syrian Regime [fixed-wing warplanes fired](#) a missile near their ambulance in al Janoubi neighborhood in Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while they were aiding civilians injured in earlier bombardment of the city by the same forces.

[Violet Organization](#) published a tribute to the three paramedics on its official website.

[Mahmoud al Mustafa](#), from Kafr Uwied village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

[Saer Bahloul](#), from Ma'aret al Numan city, married with a female child.

[Abdul Qader Nahtan](#), from [Ma'aret al Numan city](#).

[Amer Kamal al Basal](#), [a nurse](#) from Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, worked for al Salam Dispensary in Kfarrouma village. Amer, a graduate of the Nursing Training Institute in Idlib city, was also a second-year student in the Teacher Class department at the Faculty of Education in Idlib city. He was killed on Sunday, November 10, 2019, when Syrian Regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at al Gharbi neighborhood in Kfarrouma village while he was aiding people there injured in previous bombing by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian.



## **Most notable attacks on medical facilities**

On Wednesday, July 10, 2019, fixed-wing (Su-22) Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at Jisr al Shoghour Surgical Hospital, known previously as al Kalawi Hospital, located in Jisr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, which is supported by the Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA). [The attack partially destroyed the hospital building](#), and [caused moderate material damage to its equipment](#), in addition to igniting a fire in the main hospital power generators, and inflicting moderate material damage to [an ambulance](#) belonging to the hospital. Jisr al Shoghour city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

[The Syrian Expatriate Medical Association](#) issued a statement on the targeting of Jisr al Shoghour Hospital and other medical centers on their official website.

On Friday, August 30, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles at al Zerba Dispensary, one of the facilities listed in the humanitarian de-confliction mechanism adopted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and supported by Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), which was located in al Zerba town in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. [The attack caused severe destruction to the dispensary building](#), as well as [inflicting significant damage on its equipment, putting it out of service](#). We note that the center had previously been attacked by the same forces three months earlier on Monday, May 6, 2019. Al Zerba town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), which supported the center, issued [a statement](#) condemning the attack on the facility.



Damage caused by an air attack by the Syrian regime on al Zerba Dispensary in al Zerba town, Aleppo – August 30, 2019



## 2. Workers in the religious field and cultural properties:

Syrian Regime forces didn't distinguish between places of worship, such as mosques, churches, and others, during their daily bombardment. In some cases, these locations were deliberately targeted. We also recorded cases where Syrian Regime forces used places of worship as military bases from which they carried out attacks on nearby areas. We documented at least 155 attacks on places of worship by Syrian Regime forces in 2019. It should be noted that one of our special monthly reports is dedicated to documenting attacks on vital civilian facilities, including the targeting of places of worship.

On Thursday, February 21, 2019, Syria Regime artillery forces fired a shell at Abu Bakr al Siddiq Mosque in Hraitan town in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [partially destroying the building](#) and [caused moderate material damage to its furniture](#). The town was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, June 9, 2019, fixed-wing (SU-24) Syrian regime warplanes fired a number of missiles at the Morek al Kabir Mosque, known as al Gharbi Mosque, in Morek town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, [partially destroying the mosque building](#), as well as [inflicting significant material damage to the furniture](#). Morek town was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Friday, November 8, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired [missiles at St. Georges Greek Orthodox Church](#) in Jisr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the church building](#). We note that the church building was empty and unused due to being subjected to previous repeated attacks and the displacement of the Christian community from the area. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

### 3. Media Workers:

As it has done since 2011, the Syrian regime continued its customary strategy of targeting media workers and journalists. The types of violations perpetrated by the regime against media workers vary and include violations such as killing and arrest. Syrian Regime forces killed six media workers in 2019 alone, while 13 others were killed at the hands of Syrian Regime forces the previous year, 2018.

[Ali Mahmoud Othman](#), a member of the media office of Baba Amr Center, from the Baba Amr neighborhood in the south-west of Homs city, was born in 1977. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Wednesday, March 28, 2012, after he was lured from his hiding place in Aleppo city. In May 2012, Ali made very obviously forced confessions in a TV show entitled 'Khafaya Baba Amr' (Mysteries of Baba Amr) broadcast on the regime-run 'Syrian satellite' state TV channel. On Sunday, April 14, 2019, we learned that his family had extracted a document at the local civil registry department stating that he had died on Monday, December 30, 2013; it's probable that he died due to torture in a Syrian Regime forces' detention center.

We note that Ali, nicknamed 'al Jid' (the grandfather), was one of the most prominent activists in the Baba Amr neighborhood. He witnessed the killing of the American journalist Marie Colvin when Syrian Regime forces stormed the Baba Amr neighborhood on February 22, 2012, and assisted the British journalist Paul Conroy and many other foreign journalists to escape from Homs city following this invasion. We issued [a detailed report](#) on the incident of registering Ali's death in the civil registry secretariat.

On Sunday, June 26, 2016, Syrian Regime forces arrested media activist [Alaa Nayef al Khader](#) al Khaledi as he passed through one of the regime checkpoints at the entrance to al Qtaifa city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, while he was on his way from Douma city in the Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate to Idlib city. On Friday, July 12, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to torture in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate.

[Alaa](#), known as Wisam al Dimashqi, a media activist, from Bab al Drieb neighborhood in Homs city, was born in 1992.





On Sunday, November 10, 2019, media activist [Abdul Hamid Khader al Yousef](#) was [killed by](#) lethal [shrapnel wounds](#) to [the head and back](#), as a result of [a shell which fell near him](#) that was fired by Syrian Regime artillery forces, while he was covering a previous bombing by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, on al Gharbi neighborhood in Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

[Abdul Hamid](#), a photographer with Kfarrouma Media Office, from Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1996. A graduate of the Institute of Journalism and Information, he was married with a female child.

## **C. Use of Prohibited Weapons**

### **1. Chemical Weapons:**

According to SNHR's archive, we documented one chemical weapons attack since the beginning of 2019 up to the time of this writing, which was carried out by the Syrian regime, compared to six such attacks in 2018. These attacks mean that the Syrian regime has violated all the relevant Security Council resolutions, namely Resolutions 2118, 2209, and 2235.

The Syrian regime's chemical weapons attacks in 2019 injured four of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's fighters.

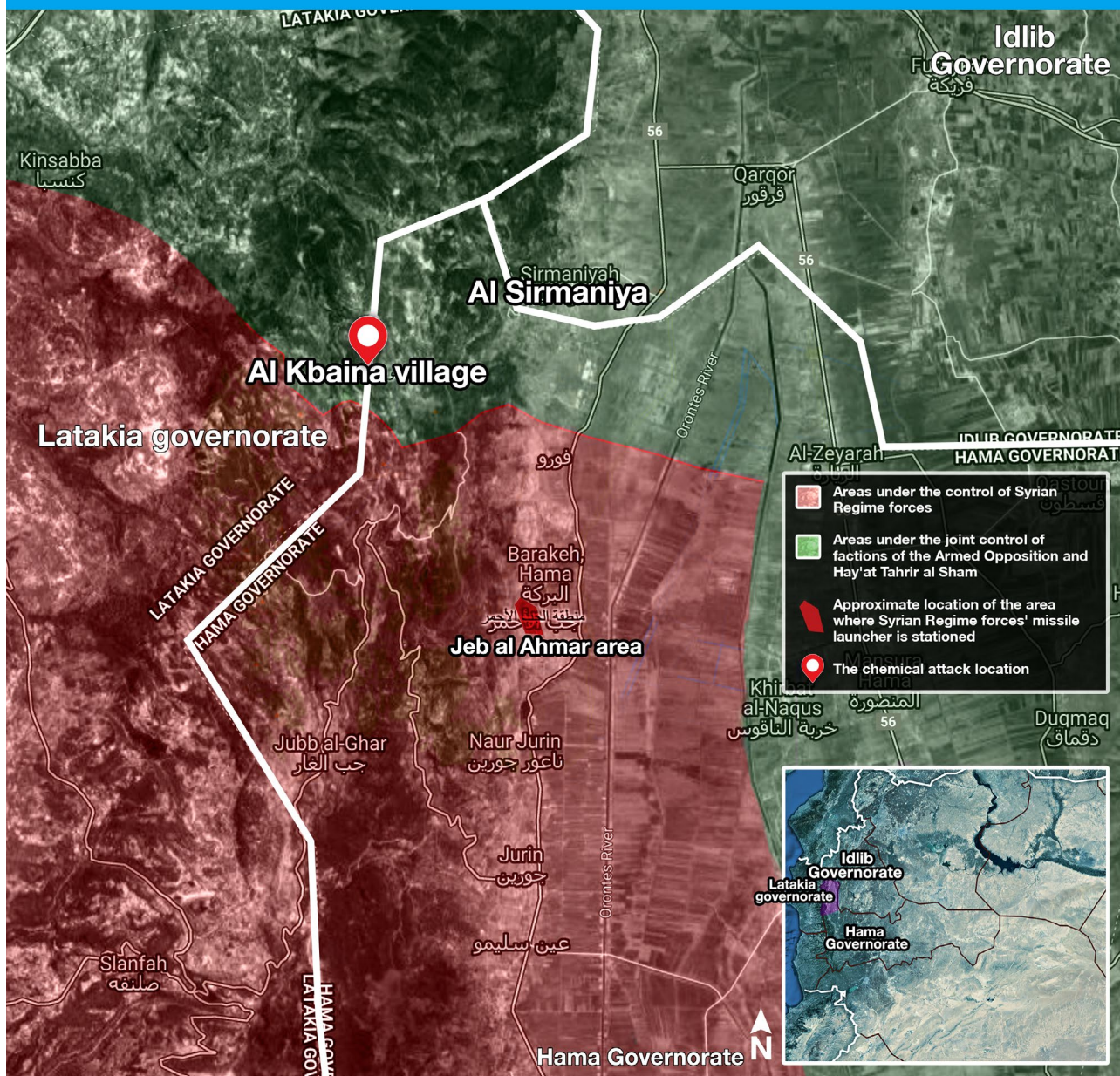
On Sunday, May 19, 2019, at around 08:00, Syrian Regime forces stationed in the Jeb al Ahmar area to the south of al Kbaina village in the eastern suburbs of Latakia, used a missile launcher to fire three missiles loaded with poison gas which targeted a base used by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on a hill in the southwestern outskirts of al Kbaina village, resulting in the injury of four of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's fighters, who exhibited symptoms of breathing difficulty, redness of the eyes and tearing.

The SNHR obtained [a copy of a report issued](#) by the Idlib Health Directorate from Dr. Munzer al Khalil. The report explains the condition of the injured who were treated in one of the hospitals of the Directorate, noting that the symptoms shown by the injured were consistent with exposure to toxic substances. The report also indicated that the medical staff who treated the injured reported smelling a chlorine-like odor emanating from the clothing of the injured while providing first aid to them. We [issued a report](#) on the incident.



Map showing the location of a chemical attack carried out by Syrian Regime forces on al Kbaina village on May 19:

Map showing the location of the chemical attack launched by Syrian Regime forces on al Kbaina village in the eastern suburbs of Latakia on May 19, 2019, and the approximate location of the area where the missile launcher that carried out the attack is stationed



## 2. Cluster Munitions

SNHR documented at least 52 cluster munition attacks by Syrian Regime forces between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2019, while at least seven cluster munition attacks carried out by Syrian Regime forces were documented by SNHR in 2018.

On Thursday, April 4, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire [three SMERCH-9M55K missiles loaded with 9n235 cluster submunitions](#) at Kafranbel city in Idlib governorate. The missiles exploded in the air with their munitions falling across an area covering 1.1 square km, targeting a popular market 'al Khamis Market' and residential buildings [in the center of Kafranbel](#) city which is located in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The explosions of the submunitions resulted in [the deaths of 13 civilians](#), including [five children](#) and [two women](#), and injured 42 others. Some of the victims were killed in the market area, while others were killed inside their homes in the center of the city; the submunitions explosions also caused [significant material damage to the market area](#). We also monitored submunitions explosions near the primary health care dispensary and near the Abu Bakr al Siddiq Preparatory School in the center of Kafranbel city. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

Map showing the area of dispersal of cluster munitions in Kafranbel city following a ground attack by Syrian Regime forces using missile launchers on Thursday, April 4, 2019:



On Sunday, April 7, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a number of missiles loaded with cluster munitions, which targeted the northern parts of Kafr Nbouda town. The missiles landed on agricultural land without inflicting any documented damage. The area is under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition.



On Wednesday, August 14, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired two RBK250-275 bombs loaded with AO-1 SCh cluster munitions targeting Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib. The bombardment caused damage to a number of properties. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



### 3. Incendiary Weapons

We documented 22 incendiary weapons attacks launched by Syrian Regime forces in 2019, while 11 such attacks were documented in 2018, also by Syrian Regime forces.

On Tuesday, March 12, 2019, Syrian Regime forces, stationed at Abu Dali village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib, used a missile launcher to fire about [40 missiles](#) in [two consecutive](#) stages. Most of [the missiles](#) were loaded with incendiary substances that fell indiscriminately on all the neighborhoods of al Taman'a town in the southern suburbs of Idlib in areas located away from front lines. The attack set fire to homes and farmlands, although we recorded no civilian casualties. The area is under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.



Remnants of incendiary weapons used by Syrian Regime forces in a ground attack on al Taman'a town, Idlib – March 12, 2019 – By: Mohammad al Mer'e

On Friday, July 12, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher stationed in the Braidij camp to fire a number of [missiles](#) loaded with incendiary substances targeting civilians' houses and agricultural land in Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama, causing the outbreak of fires in the agricultural land. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

### 4. Nail-missiles

The SNHR documented seven attacks using nail-filled missiles carried out by the Syrian regime in 2019



On Monday, August 12, 2019, fixed-wing (L-39) Syrian regime warplanes fired nail-filled missiles on Heesh village in the southern suburbs of Idlib, injuring several people. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Ha'y'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

The following photos show the remnants of missiles and the nails they launched, and one of the injuries inflicted by them:



The German newspaper Bild published [an explanatory illustration](#) of the nail-filled missile weapon used by Syrian Regime forces:



## D. Siege

In 2019, Syrian Regime forces were able to regain control of the areas which they had completely besieged and subjected to catastrophic bombardment, starvation and suffering in the previous years, including the suburbs of Homs, the Eastern Ghouta of Damascus Suburbs governorate, and the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo; the Syrian Regime forces bears responsibility for besieging these areas and emptying them of their residents. Meanwhile, al Rukban Camp, located on the Syrian-Jordanian border, has continued to suffer to the present day from a siege imposed mainly by Syrian Regime forces, who often prevent the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) from delivering aid to the camp, leaving the camp residents in horrendous circumstances and in constant need of relief and aid, with only the most basic needs. In 2019, the SNHR documented the deaths of five civilians (four children and one woman) due to the siege conditions and the lack of healthcare and food there.

On October 29, 2019, the [World Food Program](#) expressed concern about the deteriorating conditions in the temporary al Rukban Camp on the border with Jordan in the preceding months, citing reports which revealed that a number of displaced children who lived there had died from preventable causes.

On Wednesday, June 5, 2019, Ms. Sahar Mohammad al Kous, from Tadmur city in the eastern suburbs of Homs, died during childbirth along with her fetus due to a lack of health and medical care in al Rukban Camp, located on the Syrian-Jordanian border.

On Thursday, January 3, 2019, the child, Mal al Sham Abdullah al Arandas, from Homs city, died of jaundice (hepatitis) and lack of medical care in al Rukban Camp, located on the Syrian-Jordanian border.

### • **Violations perpetrated by the active Shiite militias in Syria**

The first indications of Shiite militias and factions fighting for the Syrian government in Syria began to emerge in late 2011 when rebels arrested fighters from Jaysh al Mahdi, which is headed by the prominent Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada al Sadr, with reports emerging that he was recruiting and sending fighters to Syria. The major development regarding Shiite factions' presence in Syria came in the summer of 2012, however, when Liwa Abu al Fadhal al Abbas appeared in the country, with more and more calls issued for other Shiites to head for Syria to fight, supposedly to protect the Shiite shrines generally and al Sayeda Zaynab shrine in particular. All of this went hand-in-hand with a massive sectarian propaganda campaign launched by various media outlets that ranged from features in daily newspapers to TV programs and social media coverage.



In April 2013, the Lebanese group Hezbollah publicly stated that they would be entering the conflict in al Qsair city and its suburbs. The following months saw another notable development with regard to the Shiite factions' presence in Syria, where more and more Shi-ite groups emerged, often as affiliates of their parent factions in Iraq. This highlighted the importance of the strong sense of allegiance felt by most of the Shiite political and military forces in Iraq in favor of the Syrian regime. This also applies to the Iraqi government which facilitated the flow of fighters into Syria, with many indications pointing towards its direct involvement in the conflict in Syria. Militias from Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba and Liwa al Quds were also seen to be involved in the conflict, not to mention the heavy involvement of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

While the majority of the Shiite fighters supporting the Syrian regime on a sectarian basis have been Iraqis and Lebanese, we have also documented the presence, and the deaths, of fighters of various other nationalities, such as Afghanis, Pakistanis, Yemenis, and even African nationalities.

In 2019, SNHR document the participation of Shiite militias in the military operation in Idlib. We also noticed that they were in the southern suburbs of Aleppo and controlled several missiles' launchers.

## **Conclusions**

**Syrian Regime forces have perpetrated various crimes that constitute crimes against humanity, ranging from extrajudicial killing to sexual violence, torture, and others, with all these crimes being perpetrated in a systematic and widespread manner. In addition, Syrian Regime forces have been responsible for war crimes through siege, indiscriminate shelling, and destroying buildings and facilities. Not only did the Syrian government breach international humanitarian law and customary law, but it also violated Security Council resolutions – particularly resolutions 2118, 2209, and 2235, which address the prohibition of reusing poison gases, as well as resolutions 2139 and 2042 which are concerned with releasing detainees. All of these issues have yet to be addressed with any form of accountability in light of a legitimacy conferred through Russian-Chinese protection and Western silence.**





## B. Russian forces

### A. Extrajudicial killing

2019 marked the fourth anniversary of the Russian intervention in Syria that commenced on September 30, 2015. In 2019, Russian forces didn't restrict themselves to launching air strikes, but also engaged in ground attacks and strengthened their presence on the ground, launching these attacks with artillery and tanks, and backing the Syrian regime in taking control of more than 20 percent of the region in 2019 by intensifying the blitzkrieg of military operations on the so-called 'fourth de-escalation zone'.

We documented the death of 452 civilians, including 112 children and 71 women (adult female) killed by Russian forces in 2019, as well as 22 massacres perpetrated by Russian forces. In 2018, we documented the deaths of 467 civilians, including 169 children, 51 women (adult female), and for committing 27 massacres by Russian forces.

On Wednesday, March 13, 2019, at around 15:15, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired three missiles at Idlib Central Prison, west of Idlib city, resulting in the deaths of 31 prisoners. The same warplanes later returned to fly over the city at around 17:15, then bombed al Kasih area in the center of Idlib city with eight missiles that targeted the Government Square, which includes the buildings housing the civil services of the Salvation Government (Idlib Electricity Department and its warehouses, the Central Electricity Transformer Substation, the Civil Registry building, the Salvation Government headquarter and the Ministry of Interior headquarters).

Two missiles landed on a residential building opposite the Social Insurance building, which Hay'at Tahrir al Sham had seized for use as its headquarters, resulting in the deaths of 12 civilians, including five [children](#) (three females and two males) and one woman.

We note that one missile fell in an area between residential buildings located opposite the Electricity company around 250m away from the site of the massacre, resulting in the deaths of four more civilians, all from the same family, namely two children – a male and a female - and their grandparents. Idlib city was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

The attack caused significant material damage to the buildings of the [Idlib Electricity Department and its warehouses](#), [the Central Electricity Transformer Substation](#), the Civil Registry building and the [Salvation Government](#) headquarters, all of which were put out of service, in addition to inflicting [moderate material damage](#) to the Yousef al Azma Elementary School, located opposite the Civil Registry building.





At dawn on Sunday, April 28, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at the northern neighborhood of Qal'at al Madiq town in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, [resulting in the deaths](#) of five civilians, most of whom were from one family, including one woman. The town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, July 13, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at agricultural land to the west of Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles targeted an underground cave that was being used by civilians as a shelter, [resulting in the deaths](#) of [eight civilians](#) from [one family](#) of IDPs from al Latamena town in the northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, including four children (two males and two females) and two women. Khan Sheikhoun city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Monday, July 22, 2019, at around 08:35, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a double attack in the center of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The first attack used a missile to target a group of residential buildings located at one end of the vegetable market in the city center, causing several civilian injuries. After about five minutes, when other civilians and Civil Defense personnel had gathered to rescue the injured, one of these warplanes launched a second raid against the same site, with the second missile landing in the middle of the street, about 10 meters from the [first one](#), [resulting in the deaths](#) of [39 civilians](#), [including four children](#) and [seven women](#). [Among the victims](#) was a Civil Defense personnel member, who was engaged in inspecting the site of the first strike. We issued [a report](#) on this massacre.



Map showing the location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019

**SNHR** SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

**Location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019**



On Friday, August 16, 2019, at around 19:20, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, took off from Hmeimim Airbase in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, before firing a number of missiles at al Rahma IDPs residential village in east of Hass village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of 14 civilians, all IDPs from the northern suburbs of Hama, including seven children (three males, three females and one fetus), and three women, and leaving around 20 others injured, in addition to causing extensive destruction of residential buildings housing IDPs. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, November 6, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at residential neighborhoods in al Sahhara town in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [resulting in the deaths](#) of [eight civilians](#), including [two female children](#) and [one woman](#), and injuring 25 others. Al Sahhara town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

## **B. Targeting medical personnel and their related facilities**

We documented the deaths of six medical personnel in attacks, which we believe were carried out by Russian forces, between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2019, in addition to 27 attacks on medical facilities during the same period. In contrast, we documented the deaths of five medical personnel and nearly 25 attacks on medical facilities in 2018.

### **Most notable victims among medical personnel**

[Abdul Basit Mubrak, Suleiman al Yaqoub and Mustafa al Hasan](#), three of the Kafr Zita Emergency System personnel working with the 'Free' Hama Health Directorate, from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, were killed on Saturday, July 27, 2019, when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles that landed near an ambulance they were driving on the road between Kafr Zita city and al Latamena town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, as they were heading to treat one of the civilians wounded in earlier bombing of the area by Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

[Abdul Basit Mubrak](#), [an ambulance driver](#), was born in 1985.

[Suleiman al Yaqoub](#), a paramedic and ambulance driver, was born in 1987.

[Mustafa al Hasan](#), [a paramedic](#), was born in 1987.

[Mohammad Husni Mishnen and Fadi al Omar](#), two medical personnel working for the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), were killed on Wednesday, August 14, 2019, when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at an emergency medical point of Hama Ambulatory system- supported by Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)- in Bseqa village in the northwest of Ma'aret Harma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

The bombardment caused the destruction of the facility and an ambulance belonging to it. The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), the organization supporting the facility, issued [a statement](#) condemning the attack and mourning Mohammad and Fadi.



[Mohammad Husni Mishnen](#), a married nurse.

[Fadi al Omar](#), a married [ambulance driver](#), from Douma village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate.

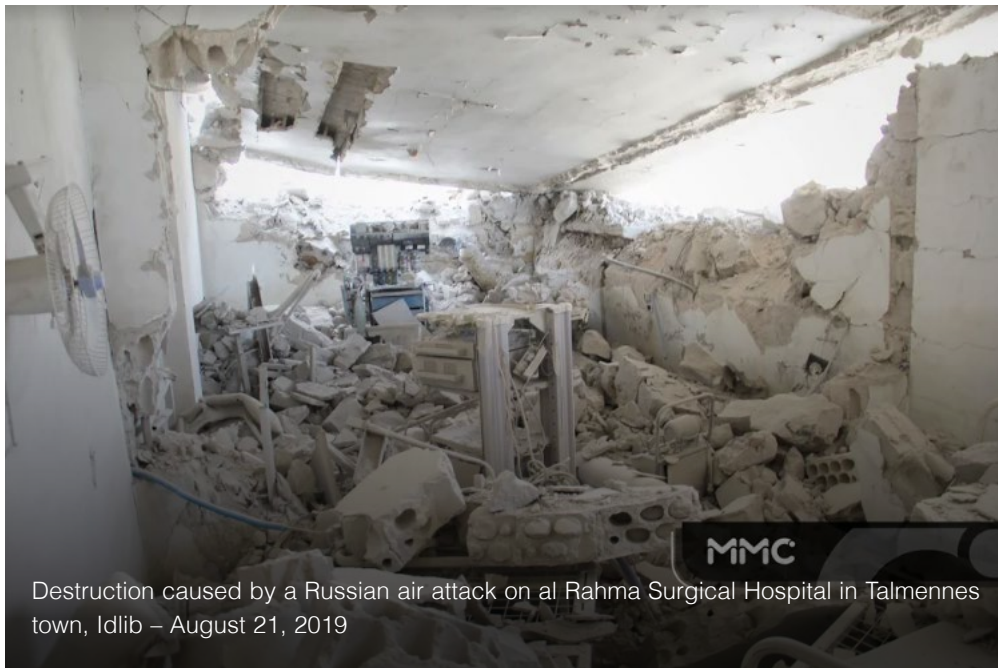
### **Most notable attacks on medical facilities**

On Sunday, April 28, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles directly targeting [al Latamena Surgical Hospital](#) - established inside a fortified underground cave - in al Latamena town in the northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, causing [moderate material damage to the equipment](#) in some of the hospital sections, the garage and [an ambulance](#) belonging to the hospital, and putting the hospital out of service. We note that the hospital had been attacked by the same forces the previous day. The town was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at the Surgical Unit of the former 'Martyr Hasan al A'raj Hospital', established in a cave, in Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, after which Syrian Regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on and around the unit, [partially destroying](#) its structure, as well as [inflicting moderate material damage](#) to the equipment. Kafr Zita city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of both incidents.

On Wednesday, August 21, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles near al Rahma Surgical Hospital, established in a fortified location to the east of Talmennes town in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles fell 50 meters from the hospital. A few minutes later, the same warplanes returned and repeated their bombardment, using a missile that hit the hospital building directly, [resulting](#) in [casualties](#), in addition to [causing significant destruction](#) to [the hospital's building](#), and inflicting severe material damage to the hospital's equipment. Talmennes town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction caused by a Russian air attack on al Rahma Surgical Hospital in Talmennes town, Idlib – August 21, 2019

On Saturday, August 31, 2019, at around 00:31, a fixed-wing warplane, which we believe was Russian, took off from Hmeimim airbase in the suburbs of Latakia governorate flying towards the southeast; at around 00:56, it fired at least six missiles in the vicinity of al Eman Children's and Women's Hospital, a facility supported by HUMAN APPEAL for relief and development, located to the west of Urm al Kubra village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The attack injured six children, [in addition](#) to [causing the partial destruction of the hospital building](#), as well [as inflicting severe material damage to the hospital equipment](#) and [an ambulance](#) belonging to it. Following the bombardment of the hospital, patients were evacuated to other medical facilities and its work was suspended. We note that a ceasefire in the area declared by the Russian regime came into effect after the attack at 06:00 on the same day. Urm al Kubra village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Damage to babies' incubators following an air attack which we believe was Russian on the perimeter of al Eman Children's and Women's Hospital in Urm al Kubra town, Aleppo - August 31, 2019



On Tuesday, November 5, 2019, at around 23:55, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched an air raid, firing two missiles that landed near al Ikhlas Children's and Women's Hospital, southeast of Shnan village in Jabal al Zaweya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate; the planes subsequently launched a second air raid with two missiles shortly afterwards at around 00:20 on November 6, targeting the hospital directly, injuring two medical staff, in addition to severely destroying the hospital building, igniting fire in a part of the hospital, and inflicting significant material damage to its equipment, furniture and an ambulance belonging to the Syrian American Medical Association (SAMS), putting the hospital out of service. Shnan village was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

Visual guide showing the site of an air attack, which we believe was Russian, on al Ikhlas Hospital in Shnan village, Idlib:





### C. Targeting media workers

We documented the deaths of two media workers in attacks that we believe were Russian between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2019, while two media workers were killed by Russian forces in 2018.

[Mahmoud Emad Abdul Aal](#), a media worker for Mhambel Civil Defense Center, from Mhambel village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1990. He had a high school certificate, and was married with four kids. He [was killed](#) on Saturday, March 9, 2019 in missile [bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes](#), which we believe were Russian, on al Mentar village, which is administratively a part of Jisr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was checking the site of earlier bombardment by the same warplanes on the village with his Civil Defense team colleagues.

[The Syrian Civil Defense mourned](#) Mahmoud on its official Twitter account.

On Sunday, July 21, 2019, [the media activist Anas Abdul Majid al Dyab](#) died of [wounds caused](#) by [multiple shrapnel injuries](#) to most of [his body](#) as a result of bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, when they fired missiles at al Gharbi al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was with the Civil Defense teams inspecting a site in the neighborhood previously bombed by the same warplanes.

Anas, a photographer for the Khan Sheikhoun Center of Civil Defense, from Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1997. Anas, who was single and held a secondary school certificate, had been injured several times before; one of these injuries was sustained in the chemical attack carried out by the Syrian regime on al Shamali neighborhood in Khan Sheikhoun city on April 4, 2017.

[The Syrian Civil Defense published](#) an obituary and tribute to Anas on their official account on Twitter.



The funeral of media activist Anas al Dyab, who died in a Russian air attack on Khan Sheikhoun city, Idlib - July 21, 2019



## D. Use of prohibited weapons

### 1. Cluster munitions

Russian forces have used cluster munitions, particularly in aerial bombardment. The number of documented attacks using these munitions in 2019 was at least four, mostly in Idlib governorate, while in 2018, six such attacks were documented, mostly in Idlib governorate as well.

On Friday, May 3, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired an RBK missile loaded with AO-2.5RTM / AO-2.5RT [cluster munitions](#), which targeted residential neighborhoods in al Jamasa village in the western suburbs of Hama. The explosion of the munitions resulted in material damage to the property. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Remnants of AO-2.5RTM / AO-2.5RT cluster munitions used in an air attack by Russian forces on al Jamasa village, Hama – May 3, 2019

On Sunday, July 14, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a number of raids on Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [one of which](#) used two [RBK-500 bombs loaded](#) with AO-2.5RTM / AO-2.5RT cluster munitions. The cluster submunitions fell on al Zarqaa water station on the western outskirts of the city, partly destroying the station's facility, and causing moderate material damage to its equipment, in addition to injuring four of the site's guards. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





## **Conclusions**

**Russian forces have, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council resolution 2139 as well as resolution 2254 through indiscriminate bombardment. Additionally, Russian forces have violated many rules of international humanitarian law, committing dozens of crimes that constitute war crimes through indiscriminate, disproportionate bombardment, particularly given the use of excessive power in these attacks.**

### **C. ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State')**

#### **A. Extrajudicial killing**

SNHR has documented that ISIS killed 94 civilians in 2019, including 11 children and seven women (adult female), while the death toll of civilian victims killed by ISIS in 2018 reached 446 civilians, including 82 children and 41 women (adult female), and the group committed at least eight massacres.

[Abdul Latif Ihsan al Hayes](#) and [Isam Ihsan al Hayes](#), from al Shaqra village in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, were arrested by members affiliated with ISIS from their home in al Shaqra village in September 2015; on Saturday, August 24, 2019, their families learned that they had been killed by gunfire by ISIS members, on charges of apostasy.

#### **B. Arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture**

After ISIS lost its control over large areas at the end of March 2019, the abductions and arrests that it had perpetrated on a widespread manner naturally decreased; in 2019, we documented the arrest of at least 64 individuals, including two children and one woman by ISIS, most of whom were arrested between January and March 2019, with the group collec-



tively kidnapping its victims during its attacks, and taking them hostage in both the suburbs of Suwayda governorate and suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. ISIS later released them following agreements with Syrian Regime forces and Syrian Democratic Forces. Meanwhile, at least 338 individuals were kidnapped and arrested by the group in 2018, including 28 children and 13 women (adult female).

ISIS' loss of control over areas it had previously controlled means that the detainees and abductees it had previously kidnapped are now classified as forcibly disappeared persons following the group's evacuation of all its detention centers, with the detainees believed to have been taken to undisclosed locations and subjected to mass-killings.

Ilewi Qasem al Fliej, Hussein al Hamidi, and Ibrahim Mohammad Hussein al Naser, all from al Tayba village in the eastern suburbs of Homs governorate, were abducted by members affiliated with ISIS in March 2019 while they were collecting truffles in the vicinity of al Tayba village, and taken to one of its detention centers in the area. Their fate remains unknown to the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

## **Conclusions**

**ISIS have violated many basic rights such as the right to life. ISIS also practiced numerous violations such as enforced disappearance, which amounts to crimes against humanity, as well as numerous war crimes through indiscriminate shelling, displacement, looting, abduction, and torture.**

### **D. Extremist Islamist groups**

#### **1. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition)**

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham came into existence on January 28, 2017. The group is primarily composed of Fateh al Sham Front (formerly al Nusra Front) and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition (Kataeb Nour al Din Zenki, Jaish al Sunna, and other groups that broke away from Armed Opposition factions and joined this formation such as Mujahedoun Ashidaa, Katibat Soqour al Ezz, Katibat Osoud al Rahman, and Lewa Ahrar al Jabal) in addition to Ansar al Din faction, which is considered one of the extremist Islamist factions.

### **A. Extrajudicial killing**

In 2019, we documented that Hay'at Tahrir al Sham killed 45 civilians, including six children and two women (adult female), while the death toll of civilian victims killed by HTS in 2018 reaching 32 civilians, including seven children and one woman (adult female).



[The child, Bashar Abdul Majid Bitar](#), died on Tuesday, January 1, 2019, as a result of shots fired by gunmen affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at civilian homes in Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo.

## **B. Arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture:**

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has pursued a policy of kidnapping and arbitrary arrest against media activists, journalists, human rights activists, foreigners, workers in humanitarian organizations and local councils, clan elders and dignitaries, and individuals who are members of Armed Opposition factions opposing HTS, and has taken many of them as hostages to use them in negotiations with their families or with the bodies they work for to release them in exchange for huge ransom payments. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has resorted to concealing the fate of the forcibly detained and abducted persons, and does not subject them to any trial except for the ritualized secret trials that are conducted by its sharia officials and security men (clergymen who perform fatwas and issue rulings and assume leadership positions within HTS), detaining them in its secret prisons and preventing them from receiving visits, communicating with their families or appointing a lawyer. These detainees are not subjected to trial by the judiciary established in the areas under Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's control, and their whereabouts are concealed since they are detained in secret prisons established by the group's security apparatus, the most important of which is al Uqab Prison in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

In 2019, we documented at least 303 cases of arbitrary arrests by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, including eight children and four women. Of these cases, 197 were released after the end of their sentences or after paying money for their release. Meanwhile, 106 individuals, including two women, are still either detained or forcibly disappeared in the HTS detention centers.

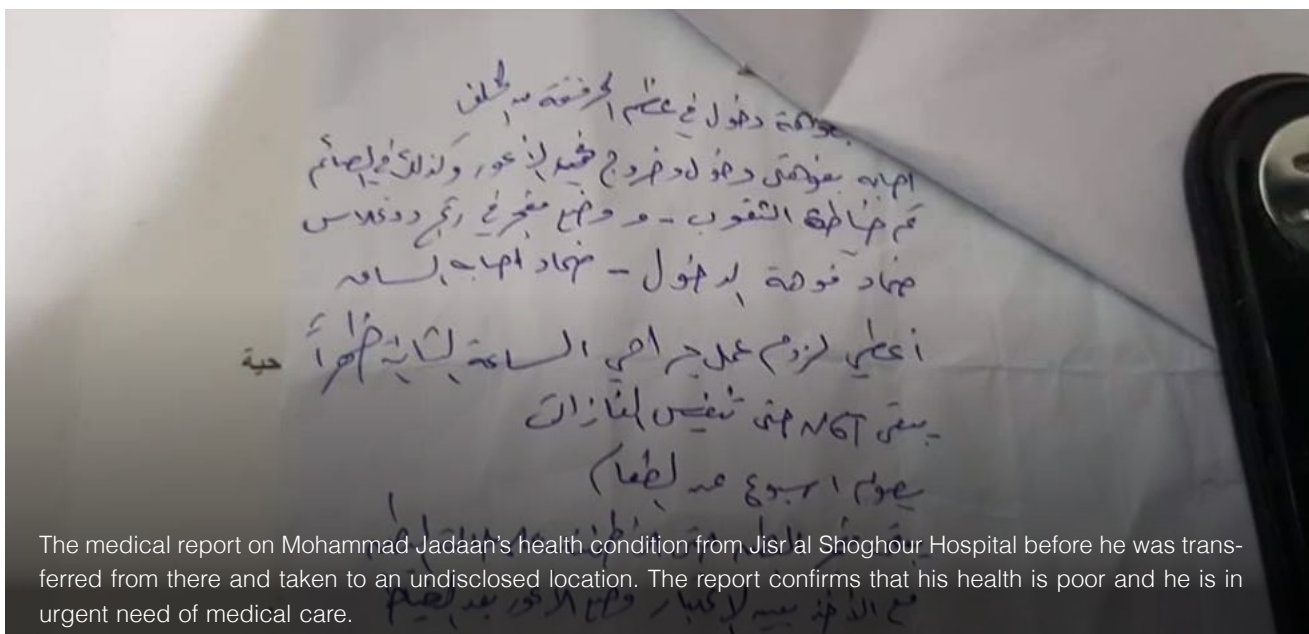
These arrests took place in retaliation for activists and civilians criticizing the practices of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in areas under control, participating in demonstrations against its existence, or organizing activities and meetings without obtaining its approval, as well as targeting people who violate its teachings such as mixing of genders and playing music. Among those detained are a number of returning refugees who were deported from Turkey. In 2018, we documented at least 417 individuals who were arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, including 15 children and three women.



[Abdullah Mardikhi](#) from Idlib city, an activist in the popular uprising and an employee of the municipality of Idlib, was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Tuesday, August 27, 2019, in a raid on his home in Idlib city. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR.

[Hani Ata](#), the head of the local council of Batabo town in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, who comes from Batabo town, was arrested on Wednesday, September 11, 2019, by members of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in a raid on the local council building in Batabo town and taken to an undisclosed location.

[Mohammad Jad'an](#), a monitoring and evaluation trainer at the Adam Smith and 'Rteam' organizations, previously worked as a media activist with several media outlets. Mohammed, from Jozef village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by members of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on September 12, 2019, after being shot at by them while passing through one of the HTS checkpoints on the road between Jozef village and Mhambel town, and taken to Jisr al Shoghour Hospital in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, then to Idlib city hospital, and then to Bab al Hawa Hospital in northern Idlib governorate under tight security, before being released on Thursday, November 14, 2019.



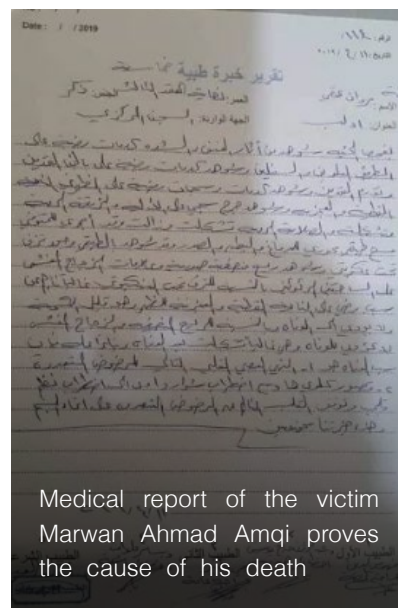
The medical report on Mohammad Jadaan's health condition from Jisr al Shoghour Hospital before he was transferred from there and taken to an undisclosed location. The report confirms that his health is poor and he is in urgent need of medical care.



Hay'at Tahrir al Sham practiced various forms of cruel torture in its detention centers, such as electrocution, flogging, nail extraction, starvation and sleep deprivation; dozens of survivors from these centers confirmed to us that the HTS security services had carried out mock executions for the purpose of terrorizing them, or carried out actual executions near their cells to instill greater fear and terror among detainees. In 2019, the SNHR's team documented the deaths of at least four individuals who were killed due to torture and neglect of health care at the hands of HTS, while we did not document any deaths due to torture by the group in 2018.

[Mohammad al Hussein al Jnaid](#), from Jazraya village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested in January 2019, by gunmen of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in Jazraya village. On Friday, April 12, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to torture in an HTS detention center, with HTS refusing to hand over his body to his family.

[Marwan Ahmad Amqi](#), from Idlib city, one of the former detainees in Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's Idlib Central Prison, managed to escape from the group's prison after the Russian strikes on it in March 2019. However, his family convinced him to surrender to the group after it issued a circular claiming that it would alleviate the punishment for those fugitives from the prison who surrendered themselves. After he was returned to Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's custody, members of the group tortured him to death, then delivered his body to his family on April 10, 2019, with signs of torture on it.



Medical report of the victim Marwan Ahmad Amqi proves the cause of his death

### C. Targeting medical personnel and their related facilities

SNHR documented in 2019 the death of one medical personnel killed by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, in addition to at least two incidents of attacks on medical facilities, while we didn't record any deaths among medical personnel or attacks on medical facilities by the group in 2018.

[Mahmoud Abdul Elah Jallou](#), a medical worker, from Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, worked in al Kenana Hospital in Darat Ezza city. He was married with two female children. On Tuesday, January 1, 2019, he was shot dead by members affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham when they stormed the hospital building following clashes on the hospital campus between them and elements of the National Front for Liberation, one of the factions of the Armed Opposition.

#### **The most notable incidents of attack on medical facilities:**

On Tuesday, January 1, 2019, gunmen affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham used machine-guns to open fire directly on al Fardous Hospital in the west of Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, causing minor material damage to the hospital building following clashes on the hospital campus between the group and elements of the National Front for Liberation, one of the factions of the Armed Opposition. The city was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

#### **D. Targeting media workers**

We documented the death of one media worker at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in 2019, while we documented the deaths of three media workers in 2018 at the hands of HTS.

Samer Saleh al Salloum, an activist in the popular uprising, in charge of the printing and distribution of 'al Gherbal' political magazine and 'Zawrak' children's magazine, came from Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. Samer, who was born in 1985, was a married father of four children, one of whom was an infant when Samer was arrested. On Tuesday, December 26, 2017, gunmen affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arrested the activist Samer al Salloum and his friend Ahmad al Hannak in a raid on Samer's family home in Kafranbel city and took both men to al Uqab Prison in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. While Samer's friend, Ahmad, was released after one day of detention, Samer remained in detention, with HTS denying any knowledge of his fate, and refusing many times to allow his family to visit him; as a result, Samer was categorized as having been forcibly disappeared. This continued until August 10, 2019, when his family received information confirming that he had been executed by a gunshot nearly four months previously, in April 2019; however, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham did not inform his family about his death. We issued [a report](#) on this case.





## 2. Turkistan Islamic Party

### A. Extrajudicial killing

In 2018, SNHR documented the deaths of four civilians at the hands of the Turkistan Islamic Party, while we didn't record any civilian deaths by the group in 2018.

### B. Targeting medical personnel and their related facilities

We documented one attack on a medical facility by the Turkistan Islamic Party, which took place on Thursday, October 31, 2019, following a number of successive explosions in a weapons warehouse belonging to the Turkistan Islamic Party, located within a building containing a medical point for [hospitalization belonging](#) to the same group, to the west of Darkoush city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. [The successive explosions](#) resulted in casualties, in addition to [severely destroying](#) the [medical point](#), putting it out of service. The city was under the joint control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and the Turkistan Islamic Party at the time of the incident.

## Conclusions

**Extremist Islamist groups have violated many basic rights such as the right to life. They have also practiced numerous violations such as torture and enforced disappearance, all amounting to crimes against humanity, as well as numerous war crimes through indiscriminate shelling, displacement, looting, abduction, and torture.**

## E. Factions of the Armed Opposition

### A. Extrajudicial killing

Many of the Armed Opposition factions that oppose the Syrian government have perpetrated a variety of violations, including indiscriminate shelling – particularly use of mortar shells against areas controlled by Syrian Regime forces. Also, clashes between the Armed Opposition factions themselves or clashes between factions of the Armed Opposition and extremist Islamist groups have put civilians' lives in danger and resulted in the deaths of a large number of civilian residents of these areas. In 2019, we documented that 21 civilians, including eight children and one woman (adult female), were killed at the hands of factions of the Armed Opposition, while SNHR documented the deaths of 48 civilians at the hands of factions of the Armed Opposition in 2018, including 14 children and seven women.

On Sunday, May 12, 2019, a number of shells fell on al Sqailbiya city in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, which were fired from an artillery belonging to factions of the Armed Opposition stationed in the northern suburbs of Hama, resulting in the deaths of three civilians, including two children and one woman.



## **B. Arrest, enforced disappearances, and torture**

The rates of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances by factions of the Armed Opposition increased in 2019, with some cases having an ethnic and sectarian character. These incidents were concentrated in the areas under their control in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. During this period, opposition factions targeted activists who criticized their policies or those who did not obtain work permits, as well as targeting forcibly displaced and indigenous peoples, taking many hostage to use them in negotiations for ransom, with their relatives having to pay massive sums of money to secure their release. In 2019, the SNHR documented the arrest of at least 405 individuals, including 20 children, and 19 women (adult female) by factions of the Armed Opposition, with 151 of these individuals subsequently released and at least 254 others, including 11 children and eight women, still detained or forcibly disappeared in the detention centers of factions of the Armed Opposition. Meanwhile in 2018, we documented the arrest of at least 379 individuals, including 23 children and 13 women by factions of the Armed Opposition.

[Mohammad Ahmad Khader](#), from al Basouta village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, a member of the local council of al Basouta village, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with factions of the Armed Opposition on Wednesday, August 21, 2019, in Afrin city, and taken to an undisclosed location, being released three days later on Saturday, August 24, 2019.

[Sabri Hannan](#), aged 75, the director of Jihan Hospital in Afrin city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, comes from Ba'denou village in Ma'batli district, which is administratively a part of Afrin city. He was arrested by gunmen affiliated with factions of the Armed Opposition in Afrin city on Tuesday, September 10, 2019, and taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR.

[Bozan Nazif Bozan](#), a member of the political bureau of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, from Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with Peace Spring forces belonging to the Syrian National Army forces on Thursday, November 14, 2019, in Ras al Ein city and taken to an undisclosed location.

Armed Opposition factions subject detainees to severe beatings during their interrogations, using tools such as wooden and metal rods, and electrical wire, in addition to using torture methods, such as the tire<sup>1</sup> and al shabeh<sup>2</sup> (Ghost); since the beginning of 2019, we have monitored an escalation in the use of methods of torture by factions of the Armed Opposi-

<sup>1</sup> The tire: A car tire in which the detainee is placed with his knees bent, then beaten

<sup>2</sup> Al shabeh (Ghost): Suspending the detainee from his hands or feet, leaving him suspended while lifting him from the ground



tion and an increase in the documented numbers of victims subjected to torture by these factions, which have used torture against those who criticized their policies, mainly against local media activists or civilians who object to their decisions, and have used more severe forms of torture against prisoners from the Syrian Regime's forces held in their custody. The SNHR's team documented the deaths in 2019 of at least four individuals who were killed as a result of torture and medical negligence in detention centers run by factions of the Armed Opposition, compared to nine individuals who died due to torture by factions of the Armed Opposition in 2018.

[Hamada Hanif Hussein](#), from Bliiko village, which is administratively a part of Rajo town in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested on Friday September 7, 2019, by gunmen of the Military Police affiliated with factions of the Armed Opposition in Bliiko village, and was tortured to death in the prison of Rajo town, before his body was handed over to his family on Monday, September 9, 2019, bearing signs of torture.



Video showing signs of torture on the victim's body, Hamada Hanif Hussein

### **C. Targeting medical personnel and their related facilities**

In 2019, SNHR documented at least two incidents of attack on medical facilities by factions of the Armed Opposition.



On Saturday, February 16, 2019, a number of missiles landed at the Misyaf National Hospital in Misyaf city in the western suburbs of Hama governorate. We believe that the source of the [missiles](#) was [a missile](#) launcher stationed in an area controlled by factions of the Armed Opposition. The attack caused moderate material damage to the hospital's garage and external cladding. The city was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

#### **D. Sexual Violence**

There has been an increase in the number of forced marriages from member of factions of the armed opposition to girls which they provide for, whether they were adults or underage. This is especially in the northern suburbs of Aleppo, and there has been a rise in sexual harassment against girls at checkpoints.

#### **Conclusions**

**The aforementioned documented cases, among others, demonstrate that a number of Armed Opposition factions have perpetrated crimes that amount to war crimes through killings using indiscriminate shelling. Also, some opposition groups have perpetrated acts of torture against some of their detainees. In addition, some Armed Opposition factions have carried out widespread lootings and robberies in different areas.**

#### **F. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party)**

In July of 2012, forces affiliated with the Kurdish Democratic Union party emerged and began to spread and take control of territory across areas of Syria. Subsequently, the party and its forces joined the Kurdish Self-Management forces, which was established in January 2014; at the request of the US-led coalition against ISIS, and in particular the US Administration, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party conducted a cosmetic change process on October 10, 2015, by including some forces from Arab and Assyrian components, in order to announce the launch of what was called the Syrian Democratic Forces, which were able, with the help of the US-led coalition, to take control of the northeastern region of Syria.

#### **A. Extrajudicial killing**

SNHR documented that Syrian Democratic Forces killed 164 civilians in 2019, including 50 children and 15 women (adult female), in addition to committing at least six massacres. Among the victims were two civilians, including one woman, who were shot dead by a sniper, while the civilian death toll of victims who were killed by the SDF in 2018 reached 285 civilians, including 29 children and 26 women, with the group committing at least four massacres during this period, whose victims included seven civilians who were shot dead by snipers, including one child.



On Wednesday, January 9, 2019, Syrian Democratic artillery Forces fired a number of shells at a residential neighborhood in al Sousa town, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of five civilians from one family (three children and their parents). The town was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, May 9, 2019, at around 01:30, a Syrian Democratic Forces patrol group - backed by two US-led coalition helicopters - raided a house in al Kitf neighborhood, also known as al Hasan neighborhood, in al Sh-heil city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The raid coincided with gunfire by the members of the patrol, which resulted in the deaths of eight civilians, mostly members of one family, including two children. The city is under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces.

## **B. Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention**

In 2019, the SDF continued carrying out arbitrary arrests, either through campaigns of raids and arrests, or at temporary checkpoints that it establishes from time to time, targeting employees of civil society organizations and using repressive practices to restrict the work of those organizations. We outlined several incidents of this type in [a previous report](#). SDF also targeted tribal sheikhs, dignitaries, and politicians opposing the group for arrest, as well as detaining individuals with close ties to members of ISIS or factions of the Armed Opposition. We recorded many incidents in which families were arrested collectively, including women and children, as well as documenting arrests of an ethnic character, in addition to arrest campaigns launched with the aim of forced conscription, which affected males and females of all ages.

In 2019, the SNHR's team documented at least 1,102 cases of arbitrary arrests by Syrian Democratic Forces, including 81 children and 56 women (adult female), of whom 428 were released; most of these releases were organized under tribal agreements, while at least 674 individuals, including 21 children and 13 women, are still detained or forcibly disappeared in the SDF's detention centers. Meanwhile, we documented the arrest of at least 965 individuals in 2018, including 83 children and 74 women (adult female).

We have documented increasing rates of arrest by Syrian Democratic Forces after the group expanded its areas of control, along with the adoption of a policy of arbitrary arrest to force the region's residents to accept their administration on the one hand, and to increase the number of their forces by launching arrests with the aim of forced conscription on the other.



Ragheb Sherabi al Harfeesh, aged 32, the head of the Syrian Democratic Forces' educational complex in Tal Barrak town in the northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, who comes from Tal Barrak town, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on Saturday, September 21, 2019, at the educational complex in Tal Barrak town. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR.

[Jamal al Mabrouk](#), aged 60, a civil engineer, the former head of the municipality of al Suwaydiya Saghira village, and his son Kazem Jamal al Mabrouk, from al Suwaydiya Saghira village, which is administratively a part of the al Tabaqa area in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, were arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on Wednesday, October 2, 2019, in al Suwaydiya Saghira village, and taken to one of the SDF's detention centers in al Tabaqa city. We note that Jamal, who is married with five children, works for the al Furat for Development program, a development program supported by the US Department of State-sponsored Creative Associates International. Six weeks later, on Tuesday, November 15, 2019, both men were released.

[Mazen al Harami](#), the monitoring and evaluation officer of the 'We'am' Program in Raqqa city, from Raqqa city, was arrested on Wednesday, November 6, 2019, by Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on his home in Raqqa city, being releasing the next day, December 5, 2019.

### **C. Torture inside detention centers**

In the Syrian Democratic Forces' detention centers, SDF members have resorted to inflicting severe beatings that cause bone fractures; this is a method commonly used during the group's interrogation of detainees and individuals abducted by the SDF. We recorded an increase in the severity of torture methods and the increase record of torture victims by SDF since the beginning of 2019; SDF also practiced torture methods similar to the Syrian regime's methods, such as al shabeh (the Ghost), the tire, electrocution, starvation, and denial of healthcare, especially against those accused of belonging to factions of the Armed Opposition and their relatives or accused of belonging to ISIS.

In 2019, SNHR's team documented the deaths of at least 13 detainees due to torture and medical negligence in the SDF's detention centers, while 10 individuals were documented as dying due to torture in SDF detention centers in 2018.



[Abdul Jalil Enaizan al Malla Hmoud](#), known as Abu Yazan, from Raqqa city, aged 45, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in February 2019 while he was passing through one of the group's checkpoints in Raqqa city. He died on Wednesday, April 3, 2019, after being transferred to a hospital in Raqqa city, as a result of medical negligence in an SDF detention center.

Ali Badr Hasan al Jajan, from al Kassar neighborhood in al Bseira city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on Friday, July 12, 2019, in a raid on his home in al Kassar neighborhood. He was tortured to death in one of the group's detention centers in al Sabha town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On Wednesday, July 24, 2019, his corpse was handed over to his family bearing signs of torture.



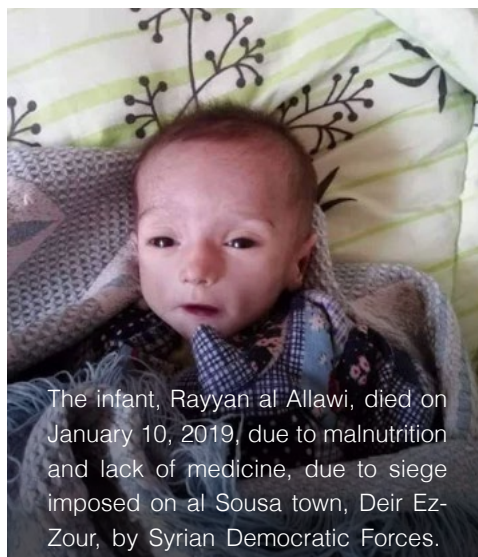
#### **D. Siege:**

In September 2018, Syrian Democratic Forces imposed a complete siege on the last enclave, which was under the control of ISIS, an area extending from Hajin city to al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The SDF prevented entry of food and medical supplies to the villages and towns that were under the control of ISIS, with the siege continuing until the announcement of ISIS' elimination in March 2019; we documented the deaths of eight civilians, including seven children, due to lack of food and healthcare.



The infant, Ra'eda al Taibi, age 7 months, from Mouhasan town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, died on Tuesday, January 1, 2019, as a result of malnutrition and lack of medicine, caused by a siege imposed by Syrian Democratic Forces on al Sousa town, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

The infant, Rayyan al Allawi, from al Sh'afa city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, died on Thursday, January 10, 2019, due to malnutrition and a lack of medicine, due to siege imposed by Syrian Democratic Forces on al Sousa town, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.



### **E. Sexual Violence:**

We have recorded cases where girls at housing centers in Hasaka Governorate were blackmailed, by members of the SDF, with sexual harassment and exploitation for aid and “privileges”

### **Conclusions**

**Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have violated many basic rights, including the right to life. These forces are also responsible for carrying out many other violations, including torture and forced disappearance, all of which amount to crimes against humanity, in addition to perpetrating a number of war crimes through indiscriminate shelling, displacement, looting, abduction, and torture.**





## **G. US-led coalition**

### **A. Extrajudicial killing**

The US-led coalition began its military campaign against ISIS in Syria on Tuesday, September 23, 2014. In 2018, 2019 saw a clear decline in the frequency of attacks carried out by US-led coalition forces, which were concentrated mostly in the first three months of 2019. In addition, the US-led coalition attacks succeeded in largely defeating ISIS until it [was announced](#) in March 2019 that ISIS had been eliminated in al Baghouz town, the last stronghold of ISIS, after which the frequency of the US-led coalition air strikes decreased. Thereafter, the type of military operations in the area changed to joint patrols between the US-led coalition and the SDF to target the remaining ISIS cells. Despite supposedly being carefully planned and carried out to ensure high levels of accuracy, these operations have led to civilian casualties.

In 2019, we monitored an increase in the frequency of the use of heavy artillery and missile launchers by US-led coalition forces deployed on the ground, and recorded a number of ground attacks, apparently launched from missile launchers stationed inside the al Omar oil field in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, in addition to artillery installed in the Badiya of Hajin in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour.

We documented the deaths of 68 civilians, including 20 children and 17 women (adult female), as well as three massacres, at the hands of US-led coalition in 2019, while in 2018, SNHR documented that US-led coalition was responsible for the deaths of 417 civilians, including 175 children and 90 women (adult female), and committed at least 28 massacres.

On Friday, January 18, 2019, fixed-wing US-led coalition warplanes fired missiles at a residential neighborhood in al Baghouz Tahtani village, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of 28 civilians, most of whom were IDPs from areas of the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, including 10 children and eight women. The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, January 29, 2019, fixed-wing US-led coalition warplanes fired missiles at al Baghouz Tahtani village, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of 15 civilians, most of whom were members of the same family, including four children and four women. The area was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



## **B. Targeting medical personnel and their related facilities**

According to SNHR's archive, at least one medical worker was killed in 2019 in an attack by US-led coalition forces. In the previous year, 2018, meanwhile, US-led coalition forces were responsible for the death of at least four medical personnel, as well as five attacks on medical facilities.

[Manaf Nayef al Hamidi, a nurse](#), from Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate and a graduate of nursing school, was killed on Sunday, January 27, 2019, in an air raid by fixed-wing US-led coalition warplanes using missiles, which took place simultaneously with coalition artillery forces firing a number of shells at the outskirts of al Baghouz area, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. Manaf was assisting people injured in earlier bombardment when he was killed.

## **Conclusions**

**The member states of the US-led coalition are responsible for the violations that have occurred since their attacks started. Indiscriminate, disproportionate incidents of bombardment are explicit violations of international humanitarian law, while the crimes of indiscriminate killing constitute war crimes.**

## **H. Other parties**

SNHR's documentation of the victims killed in Syria in 2019 includes a range of classifications, such as victims who were killed in bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified, victims who died in fires of unknown source, victims killed by landmines of unknown origin, victims who drowned, and victims who were killed by Jordanian or Lebanese forces, in addition to victims who were killed at the hands of Operation Peace Spring forces (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces).

Under this category, SNHR documented the deaths of 1,019 civilians, including 264 children, 149 women (adult female), four medical personnel, four media workers, and nine victims who died due to torture, including one child and one woman.

Also, bombings and attacks carried out by the forces included in this category were responsible for nearly 11 attacks on medical facilities and at least 35 massacres, while in 2018, SNHR documented the deaths of 1,107 civilians, including 247 children, 145 women, eight medical personnel, three media workers, and five victims who died due to torture; bombings and attacks carried out by the forces included in this category were responsible for nearly 17 attacks on medical facilities and at least 26 massacres in 2018.



On Wednesday, January 16, 2019, a suicide bomber blew himself up with an explosive belt he was wearing near Qasr al Umaraa Restaurant in Sundus Street in the center of Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, whilst a joint patrol of US and SDF forces was passing by, resulting in the deaths of five civilians at once, including two children and one woman, in addition to the deaths of 11 fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The city was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, February 18, 2019, a car bomb in a vehicle parked on the right-hand side of a street in al Qosour neighborhood in the center of Idlib city exploded. About ten minutes later, as local people and rescue teams rushed to save the wounded and retrieve the dead victims' bodies, another car bomb parked on the opposite side of the street exploded. In total, the two explosions resulted in the deaths of 13 civilians, including one child, and injured approximately 70 others. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The city was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Dead bodies of victims who were killed following consecutive explosions of two car bombs of unknown origin in al Qosour neighborhood, Idlib city, resulting in a massacre – February 18, 2019



On Thursday, March 7, 2019, a landmine exploded in Taybat al Imam city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, resulting in the deaths of five child siblings – IDPs from al Faan al Shamali village in the northeastern suburbs of Hama governorate. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. Taybat al Imam city was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, April 9, 2019, a car bomb left in a Suzuki-type vehicle used to transport goods and furniture exploded near an administrative office of Syrian Democratic Forces in al Noor Street in Raqqa city, resulting in the deaths of 10 civilians, including three children (males) and two women, in addition to injuring about 10 others. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The city was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, June 2, 2019, a car bomb exploded in the main street near Izaz Court in the middle of Izaz city in the northern suburbs Aleppo governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of 22 civilians, including [seven children](#) ([five males](#), [one female](#), and one unborn baby) and three women, in addition to [injuring 20 other](#) civilians. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. Izaz city was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

On Monday, July 22, 2019, a number of missile shells landed near a car carrying civilians near Na'our Jourin village, which is administratively a part of Shatha town in the western suburbs of Hama governorate; we believe that the source of the shell was artillery forces stationed in an area controlled by either HTS or factions of the Armed Opposition; as a result, six civilians, mostly from the one family, including two female children, were killed. We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to identify which of the two parties was responsible for the shelling. Na'our Jourin village was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, September 15, 2019, a car bomb exploded on the main road linking al Ra'ee town and al Bab city in the northeastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the deaths of [11 civilians](#), including two children (one male and one female), and two women, in addition to injuring about ten others. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The area was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.



On Tuesday, November 26, 2019, a car bomb exploded in Tal Halaf village, which is administratively a part of Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, resulting in the deaths of 21 civilians, including five children and two women, and injuring about 40 others. We are still trying to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The village was under the control of Operation Peace Spring forces (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces) at the time of the incident.

## IX. Recommendations

### UN Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following the adoption of after Resolution 2254, which asserts that the parties involved should: “... **immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such...**”
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- 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 further destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- Monitor the Iranian regime’s well-documented continuing supply of weapons, equipment and militias to the Syrian regime.
- Ensure the safety and security of millions of Syrian refugees, especially women and children, who have been displaced worldwide, and ensure their safety from arrest, torture or enforced disappearance if they choose to return to areas controlled by the Syrian regime.
- Reveal the fate of nearly 83,000 Syrian citizens - particularly women and children – who remain forcibly disappeared, mostly by the Syrian regime’s services.
- Request all relevant United Nations agencies to make greater efforts to provide humanitarian and food aid and medical assistance in areas where the fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons’ camps, and follow-up with those states that have pledged the necessary contributions.

### The International Community

- In light of the split within the UN Security Council and its utter incapability, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that can protect them from the daily killing and siege, and increase support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those involved.



- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine in dozens 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 exhausted, with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed proving equally fruitless. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the norm of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The UN Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court
- Work to fulfill justice and achieve accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

### **OHCHR**

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report considering that these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict.
- Train Syrian organizations to begin clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the lethal dangers of such munitions.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.

### **Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)**

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

### **International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)**

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.

### **The United Nations special envoy to Syria**

- Condemn the perpetrators of these crimes, the massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.



- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the transitional governing body.

### **The Syrian regime**

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Reveal the fate of some 128,000 Syrian citizens arrested by the security services which have concealed their fate so far.
- Comply fully with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

### **The Russian regime**

- Launch investigations regarding the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the people involved accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the victims' families, who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as the all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected structures, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop failing de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and allow the unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.
- Stop using incendiary weapons in populated areas, compensate the victims and their families for all human and material damage caused by the use of these weapons, and provide treatment for dozens of civilian casualties.
- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 83,000 people forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime.



## **The Coalition (US-led coalition and Syrian Democratic Forces)**

- The states of the coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombardment operations have resulted in the death of innocent civilians. Instead of denying these facts, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those who were affected.
- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.
- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF violates the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.
- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF members, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and affected.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold accountable the officers involved, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

## **Operation Peace Spring alliance:**

- Operation Peace Spring alliance should investigate the incidents that resulted in civilian victims and determine the causes behind them, compensate the victims and hold those responsible accountable, as well as working to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.
- The committee established by the Defense Ministry of the Syrian Interim Government to investigate abuses and breaches should publish the findings of its investigations into violations on a dedicated website, update this data regularly, issue recommendations and follow up on their implementation.

## **Armed Opposition factions**

- Ensure the protection of civilians in all of the areas under their control. Also, Armed Opposition factions should distinguish between civilian and military targets, and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Pledge to cease any conscription of children, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.





- Take punitive actions against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

### **Humanitarian Organizations:**

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.

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