

The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in August 2021

Delivering UN Aid Through the
Syrian Regime, Which Is Involved
in the Displacement of Millions of
Citizens and in the Looting of Aid,
Is a Flagrant International Failure

Saturday 4 September 2021

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 and Methodology:

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report focuses on the human rights situation in Syria, which SNHR documented in August 2021, and catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights indiscriminate attacks and the use of outlawed weapons (cluster munitions, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons) and attacks on civilian objects, which SNHR's team was able to document during this period. To find out more about our working [methodology](#) in documenting and archiving data, please visit the following link that explains this in detail.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Summary of the Most Notable Events in August 2021:

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

August saw the continuation of [military operations](#) by Syrian-Russian alliance forces [in Idlib](#) region in [northwest Syria](#) for the [third consecutive](#) month, with [these operations](#) concentrated in the Jabal al Zaweya area and its surroundings, as well as near the contact lines, being conducted in particular via ground bombardment, using several types of munitions, most notably those guided by the Russian-made Krasnopol laser system, which is characterized by its precision targeting, in addition to deploying new munitions that have not yet been identified. Russian and Iranian reconnaissance aircraft were also frequently seen in the airspace over the region throughout the month. The Syrian Network for Human Rights will issue a report on this military campaign.

On August 7, Syrian regime forces launched an attack using incendiary weapons for the first time in two years, [on al Ziadiya village](#) in Sahl al Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama governorate.

On August 10, Bertrand Bainvel, UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, confirmed [in a statement](#) that: "An ongoing escalation of violence in Syria, especially in the north, has killed and injured at least 45 children since the beginning of July." On August 22, [Bainvel stressed](#) that children should never pay the price for the wars of adults, following the killing of seven children in northwest Syria within a week, and called on all parties to the conflict to stop attacks on children and protect children at all times.

Since August 5, the frequency of Russian air attacks on Jabal al Zaweya area has escalated, with most of the air attacks having concentrated on the outskirts of the towns of al Bara and Kansafra in the southern and eastern sector of Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib, which is one of the areas inhabited by civilians closest to the line of contact with Syrian regime forces on the battle axes of Kafranbel city; these forces launched several raids on the wooded areas in the area of Ein Shib, al Sheikh Bahr and Qurqanya west of Idlib city, which are military areas used as camps for Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, in addition to the al Kbaina hills area in the northern suburbs of Latakia, which are military areas and contact lines.

On August 31, the Russian warplanes launched raids on the military headquarters of the Sham Legion faction (Failaq al Sham) affiliated with the National Liberation Front in al Iskan area, west of al Ghazawiya area in Afrin suburbs, the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, within the areas under the control of Syrian National Army; this is the first time that the Russian air force launched an attack on that area.

On August 14, [the Russian Tass Agency](#) quoted Major General Alexander Maksimtsev, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Aerospace Forces for military-political work, as saying that “The number of sniper pilots has increased in the Russian Aerospace Forces due to the military operation in Syria.” We note that this was not the first time Russian military officials have spoken about the impact of the military operations that they’ve carried out in Syria in enhancing their combat capability and developing their weapons.

On August 30, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu [said](#), in an exclusive interview for the Solovyov-Live YouTube Channel, “All of the latest Russian weapon systems have been tested in the counter-terror operation in Syria.” He added, “In Syria, where we have tested over 320 [types of weapon], in fact, we have tested all the weapons, except for easy-to-understand versions.”

The Syrian regime forces also continued their military campaign against the Daraa al Balad area, and the Tareeq al Sadd and Camps neighborhoods in Daraa city, in addition to bombarding cities and towns in the western suburbs of Daraa, including Tafas city, the towns of al Yadouda, al Mzayreeb, and al Ajami village. The neighborhoods of Daraa city saw several attempted advances by Syrian regime forces, which were challenged by the local fighters. This came as the Syrian regime continued to besiege the Daraa al Balad area, the Tareeq al Sadd and Camps neighborhoods in Daraa city for the second month in a row; on August 5, the regime blocked al Saraya checkpoint with earth berms, completely preventing the displaced civilians from leaving to the Daraa al Mahatta area, with the exception of allowing some of the women stuck at the checkpoint to leave on August 16 and taking them to the shelter centers in the Daraa al Mahatta area. Negotiations continued between the Security Committee representing the Syrian regime and the Negotiation Committee on behalf of civilians under Russian auspices, without reaching a clear agreement. The demands of the Security Committee, according to what activists have told us, focused on confiscating weapons from the fighters and displacing some of them towards northern Syria or conducting settlements with the regime, in addition to Syrian regime forces and Russian forces being stationed in some areas inside the besieged neighborhoods of Daraa city. [The bombardment](#) by [Syrian regime forces](#) and [affiliated militias](#) on [Daraa governorate resulted](#) in [the deaths](#) of [at least 10 civilians](#) in August, and [damaged](#) several [vital facilities](#). The Syrian Network for Human Rights has issued a detailed report on the recent events in Daraa governorate.

On August 5, Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [called for](#) an immediate ceasefire to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Daraa, southern Syria, which caused the displacement of about 18,000 from the Daraa al Balad area to neighboring areas. The Commissioner indicated that the government forces had seized and occupied several private homes in the areas of Shamal al Khat, al Panorama and al Sabeel in Daraa al Mahatta, expelling the occupants and not allowing them to take any of their belongings.

On August 12, Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, [called for](#) an immediate end to the violence and for all parties to uphold the principle of the protection of civilians and civilian objects, in accordance with international humanitarian law. He also stressed that immediate, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be granted to all affected areas and communities, including Daraa al Balad, and that the near siege-like situation must end.

On August 15, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued a statement [expressing](#) its concern for the lives and wellbeing of some 30,000 Palestinian refugees registered with the Agency in south Syria. Prior to the conflict, around one-third of these refugees used to reside in the Daraa camp for Palestinian refugees, which suffered large-scale destruction as a result of the “hostilities”, according to UNRWA.

On August 24, in his briefing to the UN Security Council, Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, [stressed](#) the importance of ensuring an immediate end to the violence and to the heavy shelling and ground clashes in the Daraa governorate, as well as ending tensions in the north-west of Syria, in addition to expressing concern about violence involving non-State armed groups in north eastern areas of Raqqa and Hasaka.

On August 30, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued [a statement](#) expressing its grave concern at the damage sustained to its installations as a result of the ongoing armed conflict in southern Syria.

On August 31, [Amnesty International stated](#) that “The Syrian government must immediately lift a two-month siege of the opposition stronghold Daraa al-Balad and allow unfettered humanitarian access to the area where around 20,000 people are living in dire conditions with scarce supplies of food and barely any medical care.”

Syrian-Russian alliance forces' bombardment of northwest Syria was countered with shelling by armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, in addition to Turkish forces, through ground attacks with artillery and missile launchers, whose shelling was concentrated on the military positions housing Syrian regime forces and allies in the villages and towns they control in Kafranbel and on Beneen in the southern suburbs of Idlib, and the Jourin military camp in the western suburbs of Hama, which are uninhabited areas.

August also saw attacks by Syrian Democratic Forces using missile launchers and artillery on the northern and northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, which are under the control of Syrian National Army forces, targeting the centers of some cities such as Afrin and al Bab, and villages close to the contact lines between these forces and the Syrian National Army factions. [The bombardment resulted](#) in [casualties](#) and [material losses](#). We also monitored almost daily clashes on the fronts of the eastern suburbs of Aleppo between the two parties.

Also in August, clashes continued between Syrian National Army forces and Syrian Democratic Forces in the villages of Ein Eisa district in the northern suburbs of Raqqa, which are under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, resulting in deaths on both sides without any change in the distribution of zones of control. We note that this area has witnessed intermittent clashes between the two parties since 2019. We also [documented](#) the deaths of civilians in Ein Eisa district as a result of bombardment by Syrian National Army forces on August 3.

In terms of bombings, in August we documented bombings in Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka and Tal Abyad city in the northwestern suburbs of Raqqa, that caused material damage to the infrastructure.

August saw a [continuing civilian deaths due to landmine](#) explosions [in different](#) governorates and regions of Syria. SNHR documented many landmine explosions, which resulted in the deaths of 15 civilians, including six children and one woman. [An explosion of remnants left](#) over from [previous bombardment](#) also resulted in the deaths of many civilians in northwest Syria this month.

On August 19, Israeli forces fired missiles in the vicinity of the cities of Damascus and Homs, according to the [Syrian News Agency](#) (SANA).

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian regime forces continued in August to persecute and arrest individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status with the Syrian regime in areas that had previously concluded settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. We recorded random incidents of arrests of citizens in Damascus Suburbs governorate, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests, some of which targeted civilians from the same families, including women, which we believe were based on malicious security reports issued due to the targeted individuals' opposition to the Syrian regime. In terms of releases from prisons and detention centers in August, we documented the release of seven detainees

held by the Syrian regime, all of them from the governorates of Damascus Suburbs, Daraa, Idlib, and Deir Ez-Zour, who were released from regime detention centers in Damascus and Deir Ez-Zour governorates, after the end of their arbitrarily imposed sentences, with their release not being linked to the Amnesty Decree No. 13 of 2021.

Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in August, with the number increasing this month as SDF continued carrying out campaigns of mass raids and arrests, targeting civilians on the supposed pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters. We also documented arrests targeting media workers without any clear charges being brought against the detainees, with these arrests being concentrated in Deir Ez-Zour governorate. We also recorded more arrests targeting teachers with the aim of forcible conscription in areas under SDF's control.

We also recorded Syrian Democratic Forces again kidnapping children with the aim of taking them to its training and recruitment camps and forcibly conscripting them, preventing their families from communicating with them, and failing to disclose their fate.

August also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham detaining civilians, including media activists and politicians, with these arrests concentrated in Idlib governorate; most of these arrests occurred due to the detainees expressing opinions critical of the HTS's management of areas under its control. We also documented arrests carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel in an IDP camp in the north of Idlib governorate; the arrests were accompanied by heavy shooting and an assault on a civilian man and a woman who attempted to prevent the HTS personnel from arresting her son.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in August, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting individuals coming from areas controlled by the Syrian regime. In addition, we documented detentions carried out under an ethnic pretext, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army's control in Aleppo governorate.

Regarding living conditions:

The siege imposed by Syrian regime forces and affiliated militias on neighborhoods of Daraa city has caused a deterioration in living conditions due to the high prices of foodstuffs and the scarcity of medicines and baby milk; with the closure of the only medical point in the besieged area since July 28, the Syrian Network for Human Rights is concerned for the lives of children, women, the elderly and people with chronic diseases. In addition to the above, the only bakery in the area suspended its work on August 9 due to the shortage of flour and fuel.

Most of the areas under the control of Syrian regime forces saw an escalation of popular discontent on social media due to the deteriorating security situation and the spread of theft and murder gangs, in addition to poor services, fuel cuts and crowding around bread bakeries.

The prices of basic food items and vegetables in northwest Syria are witnessing a significant increase, affected by fluctuations in the exchange rate of the Turkish lira and the monopoly of traders, constituting a heavy burden on citizens on low incomes, in an area with widespread unemployment, a total lack of job opportunities and low wages.

We recorded that Hayat Tahrir al Sham and the Salvation Government issued several statements banning the entry of some goods and materials, especially vegetables, from Afrin areas in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo to the areas of Idlib suburbs through al Ghazawiya crossing in the western suburbs of Aleppo, which citizens use during this season to transport supplies for the winter. This aroused discontent among residents who fear that these commodities will be monopolized and their prices increased. The prices of some basic materials, including eggs, gas and diesel, also increased due to their being monopolized by institutions and traders.

The intense heatwave witnessed in all regions of Syria caused major fires to break out in forested areas in western areas of Jisr al Shoghour in the western suburbs of Idlib, for the second consecutive month, as well as in the northern suburbs of Aleppo, causing material losses to crops and forested lands.

The areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces, in particular the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, are witnessing a continuous crisis in the availability of bread due to the high prices for a sack of flour, the lack of operating bakeries and the high production costs. In summer also, citizens began suffering from the inability to secure ice, due to the power cuts in the region for years, the high cost of fuel, and the inability of electric power generators to operate refrigerators. During this month, some villages and towns in the Deir Ez-Zour suburbs saw several demonstrations calling for an improvement in the living situation and the release of detainees.

In regard to the COVID-19 pandemic:

August also saw a significant increase in documented infections and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the northwest region of Syria, where the highest monthly record of infections was recorded since the outbreak of the pandemic was announced there in July 2020.

The Syrian regime's [Ministry of Health](#) officially announced 1,952 cases of COVID-19 infection and 99 deaths in August, bringing the official total announced to 27,915 cases of infection with 2,013 deaths, as of August 31.

In light of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its large-scale increased proliferation, we at the Syrian Network for Human Rights are concerned that it will spread widely among the displaced people of Daraa who are now living in overcrowded shelter centers in the Daraa al Mahatta area, which they are prevented by Syrian regime forces from leaving.

On August 22, SANA news agency [published](#) a circular issued by the Ministry of Health, stressing the need for health workers to supervise those infected with COVID-19 and ensure they comply with regulations and increase the number of beds for the benefit of the Coronavirus pandemic patients in the isolation department and move to 'Plan B' when necessary, this is, in view of the requirements of the current stage of the pandemic and to ensure a state of full readiness for the work of hospitals to meet the emergency health needs of citizens.

In northwestern Syria, more infections and deaths due to coronavirus were recorded in August, with [the Early Warning Alert and Response Network \(EWARN\)](#) announcing the documentation of 11,438 infections and 38 deaths related to COVID-19 for the month; this brought the total number of infections and deaths announced by EWARN as of August 30, to 37,870 cases of infection and 760 deaths.

The second half of August saw an unprecedented upsurge in the daily recorded number of cases of infection with the COVID-19 pandemic in northwestern Syria, due to the spread of the mutated Delta in the absence of precautionary measures, with the total documented cases [reaching 1,262](#) cases as of August 29, which is the highest daily record since the first recorded case in northwestern Syria. We note that the medical sector in northwestern Syria is suffering from a severe shortage of facilities and resources as a result of the military campaigns in the region, which caused the destruction of medical facilities and the migration of medical personnel, in addition to the massive overcrowding as a result of the displacement campaigns that the region has witnessed. The number of registered cases has exceeded the absorptive capacity of the isolation centers and hospitals dedicated to the treatment of the pandemic, portending another humanitarian catastrophe.

As of August 31, a total of 20,489 coronavirus infection cases, including 788 deaths, had been announced by [the Health Authority in the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria](#). We note that 1,800 cases of infection and 20 deaths were recorded in August.

In conjunction with the increase in the number of infections, hospitals and pharmacies in the areas under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces have witnessed a shortage of oxygen cylinders, in addition to shortages of some medicines in some pharmacies, constituting a crisis in securing treatment for patients.

In regard to asylum, displacement and forced displacement:

The suffering of camp residents in northern and eastern Syria continued in August, especially in light of the extremely high temperatures. The camp residents and IDPs have resorted to the bodies of water in the area for swimming in an effort to keep cool; we have monitored a noticeable increase in the number of drowning cases there.

[The camps](#) in the region also saw numerous [fires breaking out](#), particularly in Idlib suburbs, with most of these accidents caused by the improper use of cooking fuel and the explosion of solar batteries.

On August 30, three trucks carrying relief materials for the World Food Program (WFP) travelled from the areas controlled by the Syrian regime to areas controlled by the opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham via the Mizanaz and Ma'aret al Na'san crossing in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib, followed by 12 more trucks the next day. This convoy is the first step in implementing the resolution to deliver cross-line humanitarian aid, which was approved in [Security Council Resolution 2585](#). The Russian Foreign Ministry commented [in a statement](#): "On August 30, within the framework of the World Food Program, the first shipment of cross-line humanitarian aid (9600 food baskets) was transported from Aleppo to Sarmada in Idlib, 27,000 of these baskets are scheduled to be delivered from inside Syria to the de-escalation zone by mid-September," noting that this would help 50,000 civilians.

We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights believe that this is the first of a planned gradual program by Russia, which seeks to increase deliveries of aid from areas controlled by the Syrian regime, in preparation for dispensing with cross-border aid. Russia and the Syrian regime wish to plunder and control the largest possible quantity of aid, which is why they have sought for years to redistribute aid via the Syrian regime, which is the party primarily responsible for the displacement of citizens and for establishing fake organizations to control UN aid.

The besieged neighborhoods of Daraa city, namely Daraa al Balad, Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood, the Palestinian refugee camp and the camp for IDPs from Golan, saw a [movement of displacement](#) on foot towards other neighborhoods in Daraa city that are under the control of Syrian regime forces, as a result of the bombardment of their areas during the past month, with some of those displaced forced to take shelter in a number of schools

and public facilities. Since August 30, the towns of the western suburbs of Daraa have seen another [movement of displacement](#) due to the escalation of the military campaign against these areas.

Despite the failure to reach an agreement between Syrian regime forces and the people of the besieged neighborhoods of Daraa city, two convoys carrying soldiers and civilians left Daraa city towards northern Syria through the Abu al Zandin crossing, separating the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces and Syrian National Army. The first was on August 24, carrying eight people, followed by another convoy on August 26 that carried 70 people, some of whom were accompanied by their families. The Military Police picked them up and took them to Abu al Baraa bin Malik Mosque in al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo, where they are still being held up until the moment of preparing the report.

Syrian regime forces have also continued their policy of seizing homes in Daraa governorate, which they began on July 27, 2021, when the regime military divisions - the 4th, 5th, 9th and 15th - in addition to Iranian-backed militias, seized dozens of civilian homes in areas of Gharz, al Shayyah and al Nakhla in farms to the south and east of the city of Daraa, along with others in al Dahiya area and the al Manshiya neighborhood of Daraa city. This came after civilian residents fled from these areas as the forces entered them and turned them into the front lines for clashes between Syrian regime forces and affiliated militias on one hand, and fighters from the area on the other. The forces stationed in those homes and farms have turned them into military bases and headquarters, using them as centers for launching attacks targeting the besieged area (the Daraa al Balad area, Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood and Daraa camp), and using these bases to form a cordon around the besieged area, surrounding it from the east, west and south. On August 16 and 17, 2021, we documented that these forces also seized a number of civilian homes on the outskirts of al Teira village in the western suburbs of Daraa, and we issued [a statement](#) about the incident.

In August, al Hawl Camp¹ also continued to witness [deaths](#) at [the hands](#) of unknown gunmen. [We documented](#) the [deaths of eight](#) civilians there, including two women. In addition, [a fire broke](#) out in the camp on August 27, causing the burning of nearly 30 tents and suffocating dozens of children and women. We were unable to identify the cause of the fire, and the camp authorities did not issue any explanation for the incident.

Meanwhile, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama [announced](#) on July 31 that his country had repatriated five Albanian women and 14 children from ISIS families in al Hawl Camp. The handover took place in al Qameshli city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka.

¹ A camp located east of Hasaka city, near the Iraqi-Syrian border, which houses nearly 60,000 people

On August 27, [a report](#) by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on migrant, refugee and displaced children revealed that more than three million children left their country, Syria, in 2020, meaning that one out of every three children out of 10 million migrant children came from Syria in 2020 (1.6 million boys and 1.5 million girls).

In Lebanon, [the General Directorate of the Lebanese Civil Defense](#) announced on August 4 that a fire broke out in a camp for Syrian refugees in Qab Elias in the Beqaa region, which resulted in material losses.

On the political and human rights level:

On July 29, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, [António Guterres, said](#) in a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council attached to the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Program' covering the period from June 24 to July 23, 2021: "It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieving this urgent obligation."

On August 4, Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [stated](#) during the Security Council meeting that the OPCW Technical Secretariat maintains that Syria's declaration regarding the elimination of its chemical weapons programme still cannot be considered accurate or complete.

On August 12, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) issued [a statement](#) emphasizing the need to find sustainable solutions to ensure that people in the Ein al Arab region in northeast Syria have long-term protection against vaccine-preventable diseases, and added that the people in the Ein al Arab region, 'Kobani', are unable to access the national vaccination program due to the absence of political will to serve the area, which leaves humanitarian organizations with the responsibility to respond to the need, which in turn faces logistical and supply challenges in an area affected by ten years of war.

On August 15, the Syrian regime's President, Bashar al Assad, issued the Child Rights Law; we at SNHR [confirm](#) that the Syrian regime is responsible for killing at least 22,887 children, including 173 due to torture inside its detention centers (between March 2011 and June 2021), while 3,621 children are still detained or forcibly disappeared in the Syrian regime detention centers.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Narcotics Department in Jordan announced that [it had](#) seized at least [six attempts](#) to [smuggle drugs from Syria](#), through [its account](#) on [Facebook](#). We refer to the recent spread of drug trafficking in Syria.

On August 16, Le Figaro [published](#) a feature article about the smuggling of fuel transported inside trucks loaded with gravel from Lebanon to the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces which return loaded with Captagon pills.

On the course of advocacy and the pursuit of accountability:

In early August, under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the Syrian Network for Human Rights shared data and evidence on human rights violations related to the issue of medical personnel whose arrest and detention were documented by the SNHR between March 2011 and the end of December 2012; we issued [a statement](#) in this regard.

On August 4, the German authorities [announced](#) that they had arrested Moufaq A.D., a member of the Syrian regime-affiliate Free Palestine Movement militia, in Berlin, on suspicion of committing war crimes. The arrest warrant stated that the defendant threw a grenade at a crowd in Rijah Square in Damascus, where civilians from al Yarmouk Palestinian camp area were gathering to collect food parcels distributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East - UNRWA, on March 23, 2014; at least seven people were killed in that attack.

On August 12, the British Treasury delisted the Syrian businessman, Tarif Akhras, from its sanctions list, which targets money laundering or people who support Bashar al Assad regime, without explaining the grounds for this decision. The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a [joint statement](#) with 27 Syrian civil society and human rights organizations calling on the UK Government to reconsider and reverse its decision as soon as possible and to continue its commitment to pursuing allies of the Assad regime, especially businessmen and economists, in support of efforts to achieve justice for the victims.

On August 25, the Syrian Network for Human Rights announced [in a statement](#) that SNHR, along with more than 30 organizations from nations worldwide, including academic institutions, human rights organizations, research centers and coalitions of civil society organizations, have united to work on establishing the War, Conflict and Health Global Alliance, which would enhance coordination and cooperation in health and humanitarian action and supports collective voices calling for an end to wars, mass violence and armed conflict, all of which pose major threats to health and health systems.

On August 26, [the Higher Court in the city of Dusseldorf in Germany issued a verdict](#) convicting two defendants of murdering an officer affiliated with Syrian regime forces, sentencing Khader A.K. to life imprisonment on charges of executing a Syrian regime officer after torturing him, while Sami A.S. was sentenced for nine-year imprisonment for filming the killing that was committed in July 2012.

In August, the Syrian Network for Human Rights briefed the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, as well as briefing the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health on six cases of enforced disappearance.

III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in August:

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in August 2021 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.



A. Extrajudicial killing:

In August 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of 94 civilians, including 32 children and 10 women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of other parties. We also documented 10 individuals who died due to torture. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in August at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)²** : 25 civilians, including 10 children and two women.
- **Russian forces:** Nine civilians (eight children and one woman).
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham³**: One civilian.
- **The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:** Seven civilians, including three children.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Seven civilians, including two children and one woman.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 45 civilians, including nine children and six women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown source: 15 civilians, including six children and one woman.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 13 civilians, including two women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Three civilians, including two children.
- Killings by unknown persons: 12 civilians, including three women.
- Turkish border guards: Two civilians, including one child.

² We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria. Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

³ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In August 2021, SNHR documented at least 207 cases of arbitrary arrests, including seven children and 14 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army in Aleppo governorate. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in August at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The record of cases of arbitrary arrests was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 71, including three women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 12.
- **The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:** 86, including one child and 10 women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 38, including six children and one woman.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

In August 2021, SNHR documented at least nine incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, five of which were at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

Among these attacks, we documented one on an educational facility and five on places of worship. These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Four.
- **Russian forces:** One.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** One.

B. Other parties:

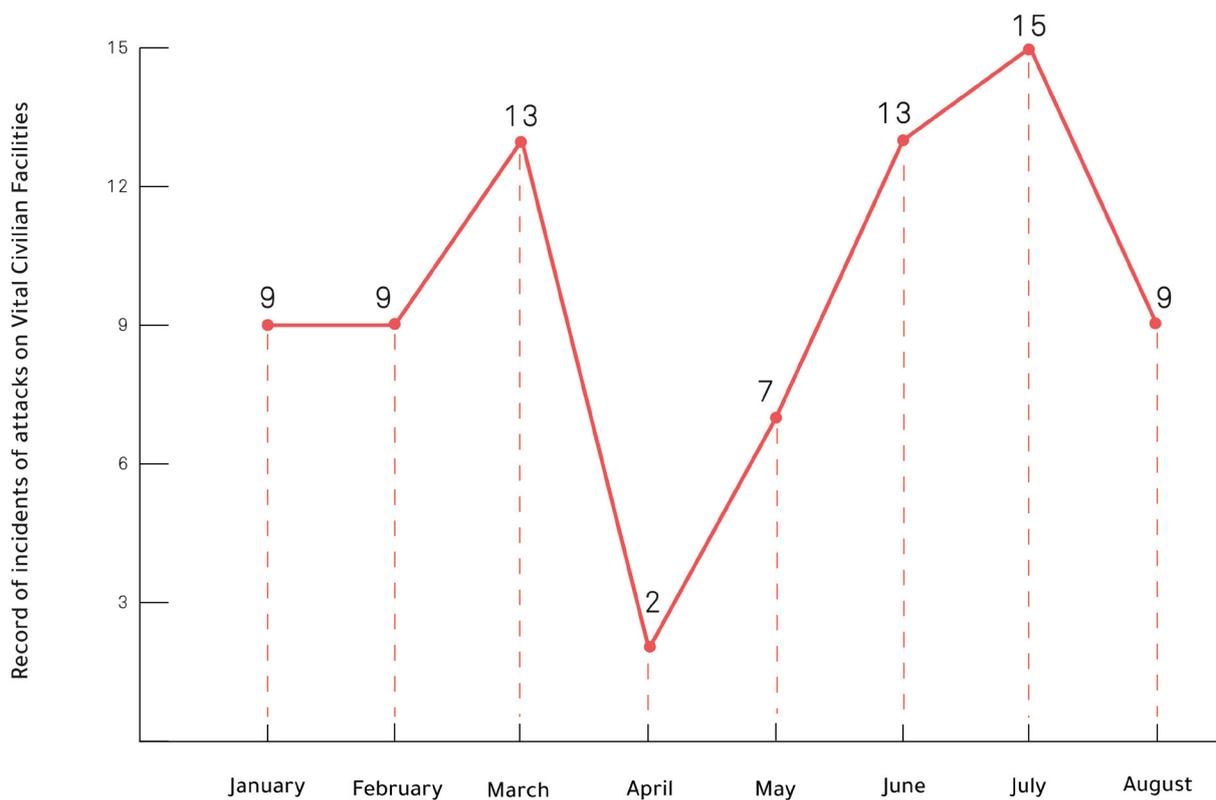
Other parties committed three incidents, which were distributed as follows:

- **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** Two.
- **Attacks by unknown persons:** One.

The record of attacks documented in August 2021 on vital civilian facilities was distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party				
	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties	
				Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified	Attacks by unknown persons
Places of Worship					
Mosques	4	1			
Vital Educational Facilities					
Schools					1
Infrastructure					
Civil Defense Centers			1		
Water facilities and related resources				1	
Official Headquarters				1	
Total	4	1	1	2	1

Thus, the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented since the start of 2021 up to September of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria has now reached 77 in total, distributed monthly as follows:



The chart shows a relative decrease in the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities in August compared to the previous two months. We note that four attacks were documented in Daraa governorate in August as a result of the military escalation by Syrian regime forces and affiliated Iranian militia in several areas in Daraa city and its surroundings, which have continued since July 27, 2021, up until the moment of preparing this report.

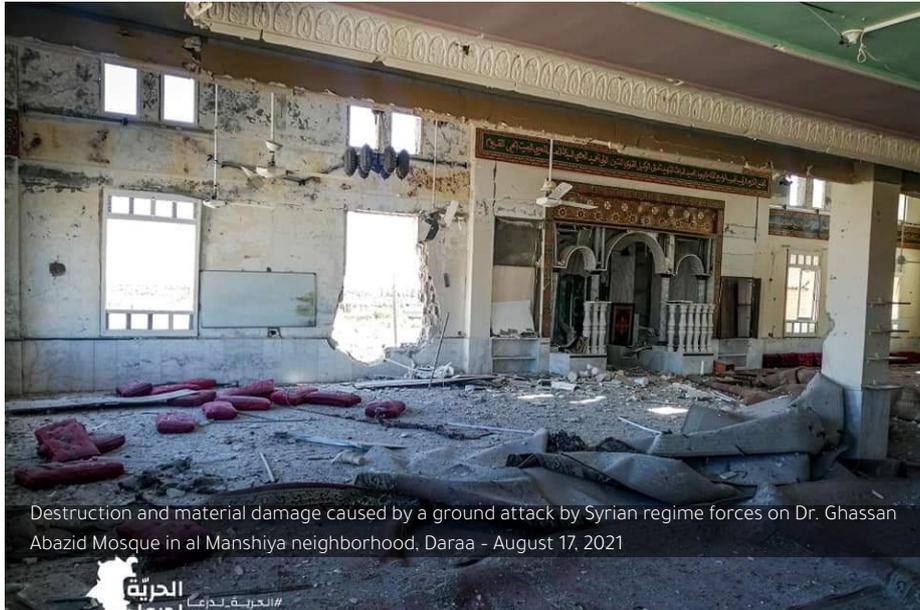
The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in August:

On Thursday, August 5, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces fired a guided missile targeting a recovery vehicle fitted with a crane on the outskirts of Hazwan village, which is administratively a part of al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in casualties. As the Civil Defense teams arrived to recover the victims, the same forces renewed their shelling using another missile which hit an ambulance belonging to the Civil Defense - the Civil Defense center of al Bab city-, [burning it](#) and [rendering](#) it inoperable, and injuring a Civil Defense member. The area was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident. The Civil Defense Organization published a [news report](#) on the incident on its official website.



On Friday, August 6, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces [fired a mortar](#) shell at Saed Bin Abi Waqqas Mosque in Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood in Daraa city, with the shell hitting the minaret of the mosque, causing significant material damage to it. SNHR notes that the mosque was subjected to an attack on Wednesday, August 4, 2021, by the same forces. The area is militarily subject to armed opposition fighters according to a Russian local agreement with them.

At dawn on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, Syrian regime forces used tanks to fire shells at the Dr. Ghassan Abazid Mosque in al Manshiya neighborhood in the Daraa al Balad area of Daraa city, [partially destroying the mosque's structure](#) and [causing severe material damage](#) to the furniture inside. The area is militarily subject to control by armed opposition fighters according to a Russian local agreement with them.



Destruction and material damage caused by a ground attack by Syrian regime forces on Dr. Ghassan Abazid Mosque in al Manshiya neighborhood, Daraa - August 17, 2021

On Monday, August 23, 2021, a car bomb of unknown source exploded in a yard used by trucks to transfer goods in the west of Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, injuring seven civilians and partially destroying the explosion site. The explosion also caused moderate material damage to the structure of the Syrian Interim Government's Izaz grain center, which is located near the yard. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses to obtain more details of the incident. Izaz city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

D. Record of indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons:

SNHR documented at least one attack using incendiary weapons in August carried out by Syrian regime forces; this attack took place in a populated area far from the front lines.

On the night of Saturday, August 7, 2021, Syrian regime forces used [a missile](#) launcher to fire incendiary weapons targeting the outskirts of al Ziadiya village in Sahl al Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, causing fires to break out in the area where the incendiary materials fell. 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.

IV. Attachments:

- (1) [Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 94 Civilians, Including 32 Children, 10 Women, and Seven Victims Due to Torture, in Syria in August 2021](#)
- (2) [207 Arbitrary Arrests/ Detentions Documented in Syria in August 2021, Including Seven Children and 14 Women](#)

V. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Conclusions:

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime or Russian forces prior to any attack under the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks lead to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.

- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, caused massive collateral damage that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations:

UN Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using the veto, as it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states’ veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians’ lives and to save the Syrian people’s heritage and historical artifacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions and landmines in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other permanent member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced person camps, and to follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing 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 who were involved.

- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' 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 have proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The 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 on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (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 and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.

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.
- Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

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 crimes and 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 establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.

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

- 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.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army

- The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Take punitive action 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.
- Provide protected facilities and vehicles, such as medical facilities, schools, and ambulances, with distinctive signs that can be distinguished from long distances.

Acknowledgments

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