

The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2021

The Syrian Network for Human Rights Website Has Been Subjected to the Most Violent Russian Cyber-Attacks in Years

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

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I. Introduction 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 October 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 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 October:

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

October saw an escalation of military operations by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in Idlib region in northwest Syria for the fifth consecutive month, with these operations concentrated in the Jabal al Zaweya district and the surrounding area; the bombardment expanded to include areas near the center of the region and other areas close to the Syrian-Turkish border, where the cities of [Sarmada](#) (on October 19), [alDana](#) (on October 25) and other locations were bombed. Another attack on an [IDP camp](#) in Termanein town in Idlib suburbs on October 27 resulted in the death of a child, as well as injuries to other people, and damage to the camp.

Most of the Syrian regime's ground attacks were accompanied by Russian reconnaissance aircraft overflying the area. A Syrian regime ground attack on Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib on October 20 resulted in a massacre of 11 civilians, including four children and one woman. We issued [a detailed report](#) on the incident.

The Russian Air Force continued its periodic attacks in northwest Syria on the contact lines between the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces and the opposition factions in Jabal al Zaweya. Most of the airstrikes were focused on these factions' military positions on the Kansafra and al Bara battlefronts in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib, with an average of at least one airstrike every two days. On October 11, the Russian Air Force also carried out an airstrike on the outskirts of Marea city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo, which is under the control of Syrian National Army forces, the first such attack on the area in years. On October 30, Russian warplanes launched raids on the military headquarters of the Syrian National Army's 23rd Division, situated on a hill located between Salwa village in the northern suburbs of Idlib and Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, close to the Syrian-Turkish border; 500 meters away from the military HQ, there is a gathering of Salwa village camps, with the air raids causing great panic and fear among their residents, as well as causing some shrapnel and stones to fall randomly on the camps.

In Daraa governorate, Syrian regime forces entered [Jasem](#) city in the northern suburbs of Daraa on October 3, beginning the process of settling the status of wanted persons according to the terms of the [agreement](#) reached between Syrian regime forces and the city's negotiation committee in September 2021; the locations affected by settlements this month included Inkhel city in the northern suburbs of Daraa, and al Jiza town in the eastern suburbs of Daraa. In October, we issued [a detailed report](#) on the violations by the Syrian regime and its allies against Daraa city during the recent military campaign, which led to the aforementioned agreements and settlements.

Syrian-Russian alliance forces' military escalation was countered by shelling by armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, in addition to Turkish forces in the southern suburbs of Idlib, through ground attacks with artillery and missile launchers, with this shelling concentrated on the military positions housing Syrian regime forces on the fronts of the southern suburbs of Idlib, the western suburbs of Hama and the northern suburbs of Aleppo.

The last quarter of October witnessed a large military build-up by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham to the Jisr al Shoghour area in the western suburbs of Idlib (Jisr al Shoghour city and its northwestern suburbs), and the Jabal al Turkman area in the northern suburbs of Latakia, with the aim of eliminating one of the Islamist groups, namely Jund Allah, most of whose members are foreign nationals. As a result, violent clashes erupted between the two parties, which ended on October 28, with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham tightening its full control over the area.

Meanwhile, the Badiya of al Mayadeen in the southern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour witnessed hit-and-run clashes between Syrian regime forces and affiliated militias on one side, and ISIS cells on the other, at intermittent intervals throughout October, without any change in the positions of control. On October 12, ISIS launched an attack on a convoy of Iranian militias in the Badiya of the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, which resulted in the killing of a number of militants among the two parties.

Also in October, 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, 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.

In terms of [bombings](#), over the course of October, we monitored several bombings with explosive devices and motorcycle bombs in the suburbs of Aleppo, most notably, the explosion that resulted in a massacre in Afrin city on October 11. Tal Abyad city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka also witnessed bombings that caused material damage to infrastructure. In the same context, on October 20, the Syrian regime's [SANA news agency](#) published news that 14 people were killed as a result of two explosive devices blowing up, while a military overnight bus was passing near the 'President's Bridge' in Damascus city.

October also saw [continuing civilian](#) deaths due to [landmine explosions](#) in [various governorates](#) and regions of Syria, mostly in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo and Daraa. SNHR documented many landmine explosions, which resulted in the deaths of seven civilians, including six children, bringing the civilian death toll caused by landmines since the beginning of 2021 to 149, including 64 children and 22 women.

October also witnessed assassinations of civilians in the villages and towns of the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour by unidentified gunmen believed to be affiliated with ISIS.

On October 8, Israeli forces bombed the T4 military airport in the eastern suburbs of Homs, injuring six soldiers from Syrian regime forces, according to [Reuters](#). On October 13, the Israeli warplanes bombed an area in the vicinity of Tadmur city in the eastern suburbs of Homs, killing a soldier from Syrian regime forces, as reported by the [SANA news agency](#). On the 30th of the same month, the Israeli forces launched a ground attack on the Damascus Suburbs, which resulted in the injury of two soldiers and material losses, according to [SANA](#).

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian regime forces continued in October 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, Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. We recorded arrests targeting civilians, including women and children, in connection with their efforts to travel to areas outside the control of Syrian regime forces, with these arrests being concentrated in Kwaireis town in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. We also monitored arrests targeting Palestinian refugees while visiting the Immigration and Passports building in Aleppo city to obtain documents related to travel outside the country. We also recorded arrests carried out by Syrian regime forces targeting civilians, including university students, over their criticism of the living conditions in the areas controlled by the Syrian regime.

Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in October, 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 workers at the local and civil councils affiliated with the SDF., with these arrests concentrating in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour governorates. In addition to these cases, we documented a number of arrests targeting civilians over their participation in an anti-SDF protest criticizing the poor living and service conditions and arrests in the areas controlled by SDF. These arrests were concentrated in Raqqa city.

October 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. These detentions were carried out arbitrarily in the form of raids in which HTS members stormed their victims' homes, often breaking down the doors, or by abducting their victims while they were traveling or passing through temporary checkpoints. We also documented arrests carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel against civilians from one family, which were concentrated in Kafr Takhareem city in the governorate western suburbs.

Meanwhile, all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in October, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting individuals, including women, 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. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions through the judiciary, with these arrests also carried out without presenting any clear charges against those being detained. In addition to these cases, we also documented raids and arrests carried out by Syrian National Army personnel, targeting civilians on charges of collaborating with Syrian Democratic Forces. These arrests were concentrated in some villages of Afrin city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Regarding living conditions:

The economic situation continued to deteriorate in October in all regions of Syria, especially the areas under the control of the Syrian regime, where Suwayda city witnessed calls for strikes and popular protests until 400 liters of diesel was provided for each family to be used for heating during the winter. From its part, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade on October 23 increased the [price of industrial and commercial diesel](#) to 1,700 Syrian pounds per liter, and on October 24 set the [price of domestic and industrial gas](#) not purchased via the 'smart card' system at 30,600 Syrian pounds for a 10 kg household gas cylinder, and 49,000 Syrian pounds for an industrial gas cylinder of 16 kg.

Regarding the electricity crisis, the Syrian regime government's Minister of Electricity told the pro-regime [Sham FM](#) website on October 10 that "There are difficulties in securing a warm winter this year, especially with the great shortage of gas and fuel."

The prices of foodstuffs also continued to increase, with many of them being scarce. Ziad Sabbagh, the Syrian regime government's Minister of Industry, [told](#) the pro-regime al Watan newspaper on October 10 that all state-owned sugar refineries are closed, increasing the price and scarcity of sugar. As for vegetable oils, the price of one liter in the market has reached [three times the international](#) price, according to Abdul Aziz al Maqali, head of the Syrian regime government's Consumer Protection Association, as reported by al Watan newspaper on October 10. [As a result](#) of the water shortage crisis in many areas, meanwhile, residents of some areas of the Damascus Suburbs governorate have resorted to buying water from mobile tankers that obtain water from polluted pools, causing up 1,200 cases of poisoning, according to [Radio Sham FM's](#) report on its Facebook page, citing the Syrian regime government's Damascus Countryside Health Directorate.

In northwestern Syria, the population has suffered from the increasing pace in price rises of basic commodities, especially bread, fuel and heating materials, with the spread of unemployment further exacerbating the deteriorating situation in the region.

Bread bakeries in the areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces in Deir Ez-Zour suburbs have also witnessed a crisis due to the high prices for a sack of flour, the lack of bakeries and the high costs of production. On the medical level, hospitals and pharmacies in the eastern region are suffering from a shortage of oxygen cylinders due to the high rate of coronavirus infections, in addition to a shortage of some medicines in pharmacies.

On October 1, the International Committee of the Red Cross issued a [report](#) on the water crisis in Syria; the report indicated that the amount of drinking water available has decreased by up to 40% from the levels of a decade ago. In the same period, the number of sanitation systems has fallen by 50%, in addition to losing 30-40% of the technical staff operating them, most of whom left the country.

On October 5, Stéphane Dujarric, the Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General, said in New York during the [daily briefing](#), that the United Nations has received reports that five million people are adversely affected by the ongoing water crisis in the north and north-east of Syria. He added that the people across the northern parts of Syria have been unable to reliably access sufficient and safe water due to low water levels, disruptions to water systems, and the already reduced operational capacity of water stations.

On October 21, the World Food Program (WFP) released its [report](#) on the situation of food security in Syria (the emergency dashboard); the report showed that 12.4 million people in Syria are suffering from food insecurity, 1.3 million suffer from severe food insecurity, and 1.8 million people are at risk of being food insecure.

On October 27, Martin Griffiths, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, [briefed](#) the Security Council in New York, said, "**Ten years into the conflict life remains difficult for millions of Syrians and increasingly difficult for many.**" Griffiths pointed out that Syrians will face another bitter winter this year, and that rain, cold and winter conditions will compound hardship for millions of people, adding: "We need an urgent injection of life-saving aid, especially as Syrians prepare for winter."

In regard to the COVID-19 pandemic:

October also saw an unprecedented increase in documented infections with the COVID-19 pandemic across Syria, the greatest such increase since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The Syrian regime's [Ministry of Health](#) officially announced 9,199 cases of COVID-19 infection and 319 deaths in October, bringing the official total announced to 43,404 cases of infection with 2,566 deaths, as of October 31.

On October 17, Tawfiq Hasaba, Director of Readiness, Ambulance and Emergency Department with the Syrian regime government's Ministry of Health, [said](#) that coronavirus infections are expected to increase, although the hospitals are already full. He added, **"We are in the peak state of infection with the coronavirus, and the numbers are expected to rise."**

In northwestern Syria, more infections and deaths due to coronavirus were recorded in October, with [the Early Warning Alert and Response Network \(EWARN\)](#) announcing the documentation of 15,871 infections and 649 deaths related to COVID-19 for the month; this brought the total number of infections and deaths announced by EWARN in October, to 88,423 cases of infection and 1,847 deaths.

The cessation of support for some medical facilities caused their closure, exacerbating the medical crisis in the region, which suffers from a scarcity of medical centers due to their being repeatedly targeted, putting them out of service and causing the emigration of their surviving staff. The hospital occupancy rate has reached 100% during the past month, with the remaining hospitals and clinics unable to receive hundreds of difficult cases.

Because of the increasing cases of infection and deaths due to the coronavirus in northwestern Syria, the Syrian Interim Government on October 4 issued a two-week [partial ban](#) to limit the severity of the virus' spread. The ban decision included all government institutions, private establishments, schools, banning social and other events, closing markets, and implementing curfews from 7 pm until 5 am.

As of October 31, a total of 35,404 coronavirus infection cases, including 1,341 deaths, had been announced by [the Health Authority in the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria](#). We note that 7,559 cases of infection and 409 deaths were recorded in October.

On October 14, Doctors Without Borders (RSF) published a [press release](#) on the situation of the pandemic in the regions of northeast and northwest Syria, in which it indicated that the current wave of COVID-19 is the most severe recorded wave yet in the areas of northern Syria. The release added that the healthcare systems in the northeast and northwest are unable to cope, with shortages of oxygen and ventilators.

In regard to asylum, displacement and forced displacement:

On October 8, the Human Rights Council issued a [statement](#) confirming that Syria is still not safe for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and condemning the continued military operations of Syrian regime forces in Daraa and Idlib. The Syrian Network for Human Rights stresses the importance of these reports in light of the false claims by some countries that military action has ceased in Syria, with these nations demanding the return of refugees, which puts them at risk of bombing, in addition to arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, financial extortion, and forced conscription in the regime's army; such risks mean that the countries hosting refugees are responsible for granting Syrians refugee status, not just protection.

On October 20, Human Rights Watch issued its report, "[Our Lives Are Like Death](#)", which spoke about the violations against refugees returning to Syria from Lebanon and Jordan. The report emphasized that all of those interviewed (65 refugees who returned to Syria) were subjected to one or more grave violations, including killing, enforced disappearance, torture, and sexual violence. The Syrian Network for Human Rights contributed to this report by providing a number of these victims to talk about the violations they were subjected to, and sharing information about what refugee returnees are subjected to, with the report concluding that Syria is not safe for the return of refugees.

On October 25, the Chair of the UN Syria Commission of Inquiry, Paulo Pinheiro, [addressed](#) the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, warning the international community that while some might believe the conflict is ending, the facts on the ground paint another picture. He added: **"This is not a time for anyone to be thinking that Syria is safe, for its refugees to return home. Instead, we are seeing an upsurge in fighting and violence."**

On October 6, al Hawl Camp¹ saw the outbreak of a [fire](#) of an unknown source that damaged several tents.

On October 7, [the Bild](#) newspaper reported that eight women and 23 children had arrived in Germany the previous day coming from al Hawl Camp, in what it called "the largest repatriation of German citizens from Syria so far." [The Local website](#) also published a report on the same day stating that Denmark had repatriated three female nationals from al Rouj Camp in eastern Syria, along with their 14 children.

In a [statement](#) issued on October 7, Save the Children welcomed the step taken by Germany and Denmark and called on all governments to follow their example, warning against the policy of separating mothers from their children in exchange for the children's return to their countries.

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

On October 13, Rights and Security International² issued a report entitled '[Abandoned to Torture](#)' calling for the immediate repatriation of women and children detained in what it called "detention camps" in northeast Syria. The report estimated that 12,000 of the children and women in the al Hawl and al Rouj camps are third-country nationals (not citizens of Iraq or Syria) being detained without any charge or the possibility of a fair trial, and that nearly two-thirds of the children there are under the age of 12. The report called on the British government to repatriate its citizen children from those camps.

On October 19, the [Mirror newspaper](#) reported that Syrian Democratic Forces in northeast Syria handed over three children of British nationality to a British delegation.

On October 19, Hanna Maliar, Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine, [announced](#) on her Facebook account that her country had repatriated the fourth group of its citizens from eastern Syria.

On October 21, Syrian Democratic Forces allowed [the nineteenth group³ of IDPs](#) to date, consisting of 18 Syrian families - approximately 74 individuals -, to leave al Hawl Camp and return to their villages and towns in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour.

On October 25, Human Rights Watch issued a [report](#) entitled 'Canadians Stuck in Syria Camps Struggle to Survive,' in which it touched upon the Canadian government's disregard for its citizens among ISIS families in al Hawl Camp.

The suffering of the residents of al Rukban Camp continues with the approach of the winter season as a result of the acute shortage of most materials inside the camp, mainly food, medical resources and potable water, which threatens the spread of diseases and epidemics in the absence of health-care.

On October 27, the US Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, [stated](#) during a briefing to discuss developments in Syria at the Security Council that more than 12 million Syrians remain displaced, whether inside their homeland or as refugees, with poverty levels close to 90%.

² An independent non-governmental organization established in 1990 in Britain and Ireland that works on monitoring illegal actions committed by governments under the pretext of national security, which confronts these governments on their actions and reminds them of their responsibilities.

³ Following the decision 146 issued by Syrian Democratic Forces' Self-Management Authority on October 10, 2020, allowing Syrians in the camp to leave after completing the necessary procedures

On the political and human rights level:

On October 6, the [French Foreign Ministry](#) stated, in response to the Interpol decision allowing Syria to access its communications network, "As long as the Syrian regime continues to fuel instability, the humanitarian crisis and the risk of terrorism, France will remain opposed to the normalization of relations with Damascus and to any easing of the sanctions regime."

On October 7, the White House announced on [its official website](#) that US President Joe Biden had renewed the national emergency regarding dealing with the threat that the situation in Syria poses to US national security and foreign policy. The state of emergency allows the US administration to seize the property of those who are proven to be involved in the event of continued instability in Syria and impose sanctions on them, including not granting visas to enter the United States and any financial loans.

On October 11, coinciding with International Day of the Girl Child, the International Rescue Committee issued a [report](#) in which it ranked Syria among the five most dangerous places in the world for girls. A survey conducted by the organization in northwest Syria found that forced child marriage has become common for fear of sexual exploitation, abuse and kidnapping, adding that 70% of girls and women surveyed said that child brides were at increased risk of domestic violence.

On October 13, [Reuters](#) news agency quoted U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken as saying that the United States does not intend to support any efforts to normalize ties with Syrian regime's President Bashar al Assad or rehabilitate him until there is irreversible progress towards a political solution in Syria.

On October 15, the Interpol [website](#) published a statement in which it announced that in October it had lifted corrective measures from the National Central Bureau (NCB) in Damascus regarding the Syrian regime's use of the INTERPOL Information System in implementation of the decision taken by the Executive Committee in June 2021, after additional training for the NCB Damascus staff. The Syrian Network for Human Rights condemns the restoration of any authority to the Syrian regime because it has never changed since 2011, but has rather committed more violations, some of which constitute crimes against humanity.

Between October 18 and 22, the sixth round of the meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee was held in Geneva, within the framework of finding a political solution to the situation in Syria in accordance with UN Resolution [2254](#), under the supervision of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen. The round did not make any progress and the two parties did not agree on a date for the next round. "**A consensus on how to move forward was not achieved,**" Mr. Pedersen said during [a press conference](#) at the end of the sixth round, during which the Syrian regime committed the Ariha massacre, which was not condemned by the delegations participating in the round or by the UN envoy, or even referred to during his briefing at the Security Council.

On October 20, [an investigation](#) conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Operations and Policy Center, and the Center for Operational Analysis and Research confirmed that the Central Bank of Syria, which is subject to sanctions by the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Union, had obtained \$60 million in 2020 by manipulating the Syrian currency, with the central bank forcing UN agencies to use a lower exchange rate, making UN contracts one of the main ways for the Syrian regime to make money.

On October 21, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Justice [announced on its Facebook account](#) that it had executed 24 people charged with setting fires, and punished 11 people with life imprisonment with hard labor for committing terrorist acts, in addition to ordering the detention of five minors for periods ranging between ten and 12 years on the same charge. On October 23, [European Union Spokesperson Peter Stano](#) expressed his condemnation of the death sentence carried out by the Syrian regime, and expressed his grave concern due to the presence of minors among those who were punished.

On October 21, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security, with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, released [the third edition of the global Women Peace and Security Index \(WPS Index\)](#), which draws on recognized data sources in 170 countries. The report ranked Syria in the penultimate rank as the worst country in the world in terms of women's peace and security, followed by Afghanistan in last place. According to the report, Syria is the worst in the world with regard to organized violence against women, and the worst at the regional level with regard to the safety of women in society.

On October 25, [the official website](#) of the Syrian regime's Presidency of the Council of Ministers announced the launch of a project to strengthen the capacity of local communities in Eastern Ghouta to confront climate changes and water shortages through integrated management of natural resources and immediate adaptation interventions in cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization. We note that this was not the first time that the Syrian regime has received support from United Nations bodies, which enables it to obtain material support despite the economic sanctions imposed on it. The Syrian Network for Human Rights condemns this cooperation with a regime involved in committing atrocious violations of human rights, which is considered participation, support and encouragement for continuing them.

On October 27, the [Twitter](#) official account of the World Health Organization office in Damascus posted [a video](#) showing workers dancing in the Damascus office to celebrate United Nations Day, before it was deleted after nearly four hours. The tweet included the phrase, "United with a common goal of promoting health, keeping the world safe from disease, and serving the vulnerable." This video indicates that the Syrian regime continues to employ the WHO office to serve its interests, including covering up its crimes against medical personnel in light of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the failure of this regime to implement the precautionary measures stipulated

by the organization, which contributes to the deterioration of health conditions in the country. We note that the World Health Organization had previously demonstrated its cooperation with the Syrian regime, through its election to the organization's Executive Board, and the organization's use of one of the Syrian airlines 'Cham Wings Airlines' involved in supporting the Syrian regime's atrocious violations. The Syrian Network for Human Rights condemns these practices; we have previously issued reports in this regard.

On October 28, [SANA news agency](#) published news stating that Cham Wings Airlines, which has been subject to US sanctions since 2016, participated as a main sponsor in the 13th Global Humanitarian Aviation Conference & Exhibition in Dubai, UAE, organized by the World Food Programme. We note that this company has been subject to US sanctions, in connection with transferring militants to fight in Syria on behalf of Syrian regime forces, in addition to transferring arms, according [the US Department of the Treasury](#). Recently, there has been an increase in the pace of cooperation between the United Nations bodies and the Syrian regime, which the Syrian Network for Human Rights consistently condemns, calling on all parties not to grant a regime that has committed and continues to commit grave violations against its people any moral or material support from the United Nations bodies.

On the course of advocacy and the pursuit of accountability:

On October 2, the [US Department of Justice](#) published a statement announcing the initiation of a lawsuit against the Canadian citizen born in Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Khalifa, known as Abu Radwan al Kanadi, in the US state of Virginia, on charges of affiliation with ISIS. The statement indicated that Muhammad had held important positions in ISIS since 2013 and continued until his arrest by Syrian Democratic Forces in January 2019.

On October 5, the Syrian Network for Human Rights and the Syria Campaign held a [high-level event](#) on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meetings, entitled "One Hundred Thousand, and Counting: Seeking Justice for Syria's Disappeared," with the participation of ambassadors and diplomats from US, France, and the United Kingdom and figures from civil society and human rights defenders. we issued a [statement](#) on the event on October 7.

On October 9, the [movie "Bringing Assad to Justice"](#), which reviews for 150 minutes the most prominent violations committed by the Syrian regime, won the [Best Documentary Award](#) at the Cannes Independent Film Festival in 2021.

On October 11, the European Union announced, in a [statement](#), a decision to extend sanctions and restrictive measures against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons for an additional year, until 16 October 2022, which target individuals and entities directly responsible for the development and use of chemical weapons, as well as those providing financial, technical or material support. The [list](#) of these sanctions included 15 persons, including five Syrians, and most of the ten others of Russian nationality, in addition to two Syrian and Russian entities. The sanctions include a ban on travel to the EU, an asset freeze for individuals, and an asset freeze for entities.

On October 11, the Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a [statement](#) about its nomination of the Syrian child Muhammad Nour Al-Asmar from the city of Binnish in Idlib for the International Children's Peace Prize for the year 2021, and the acceptance of his nomination along with 162 other children from around the world. It is noteworthy that Muhammad Nour is the only Arab child nominated in the peace category for this year's award.

On October 19, [the German Federal Court](#) in the city of Karlsruhe upheld a life imprisonment sentence against a person involved in the massacre at the landfill in Tabqa city, eastern Syria, in 2013, in which a number of members of the Syrian regime's police, army and security forces were killed after being captured when ISIS seized control over Raqqa city. The court also upheld varying prison sentences against three people who fought in the ranks of the al Nusra Front. According to the [DW](#) website, the defendants arrived in Europe and recently lived in various German cities.

On October 22, the Syrian Network for Human Rights held an event entitled "[Advancing the Cause of Detainees and Forcibly Disappeared Persons Is Our Collective Responsibility](#)," in cooperation and coordination with the organizations co-founding the Truth and Justice Charter. A number of representatives of civil society organizations advocating for the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared participated in the event, and we issued a [statement](#) on October 24 on the event that included the most prominent recommendations it made in this regard.

On October 26, the Odense Court in Denmark began hearings regarding a case against a Danish company for violating the sanctions imposed by the European Union on the Syrian regime. According to [Reuters](#), the Dan-Bunkering Company sold about 172,000 tons of kerosene jet fuel between 2015 and 2017 to two Russian companies that handed it over to the Syrian regime at Banyas port in Latakia.

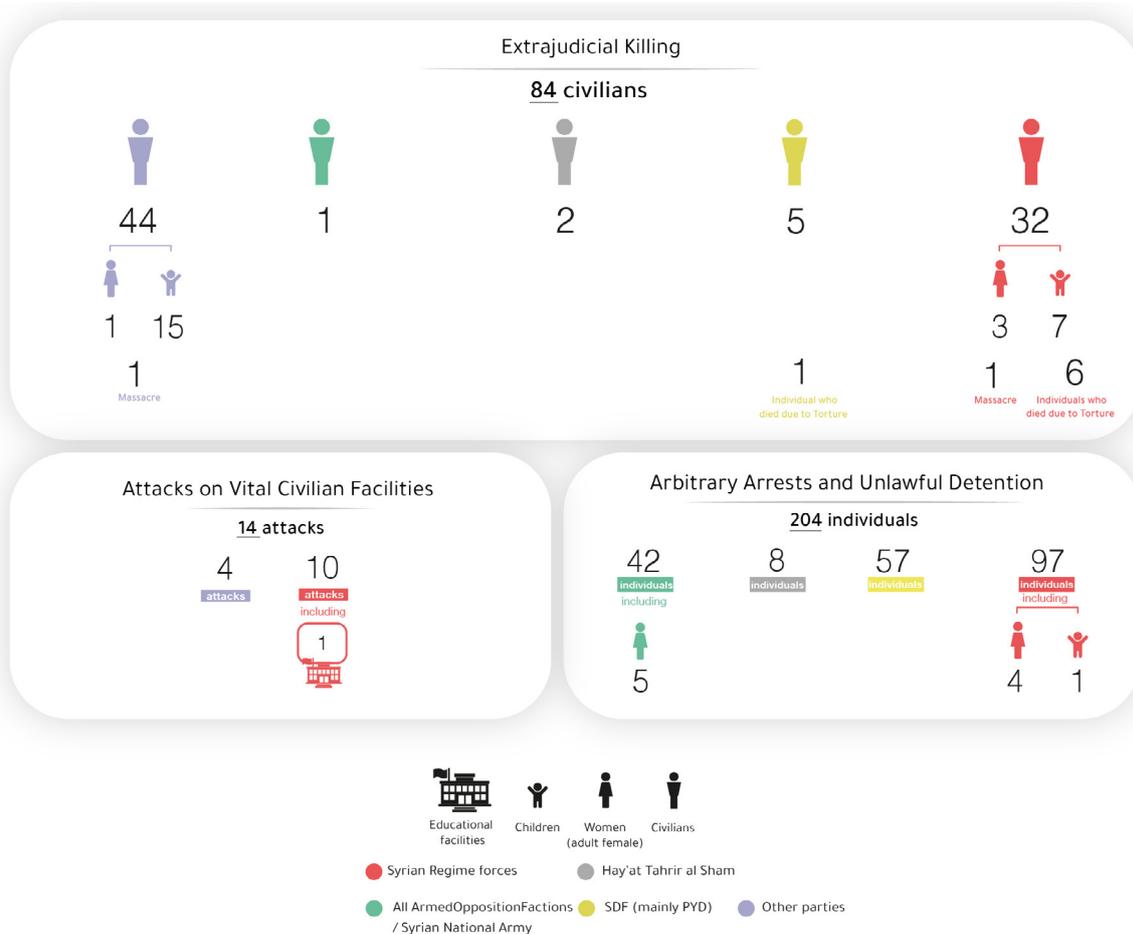
On October 28, the Public Prosecution Office in the German city of Hamburg published [a statement](#) in which it said that the Public Prosecutor's Office in Hamburg had filed charges against a 27-year-old Syrian citizen, on charges of belonging to the Ahrar al Sham faction and participating in the siege of villages with a majority-Shiite population, as well as appearing in a propaganda video for Ahrar al Sham filmed in an area controlled by the faction. The statement indicated that the defendant had left Syria in January 2016 to travel to Germany.

In October, 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 five cases of enforced disappearance.

Since the beginning of October, the official website of the Syrian Network for Human Rights has been subjected to very violent cyber-attacks aimed at obstructing browsing of the website, in preparation for permanently shutting it down. Charts provided by the Cloudflare Security Services showed that the source of the vast majority of the attacks is Russia; the reason behind these attacks is the Syrian Network for Human Rights' documentation of the multiple violations committed by Russian forces since the beginning of Russia's military intervention in Syria in September 2015, with SNHR issuing almost 92 reports proving Russian forces' involvement in war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people. We issued [two statements](#) in this [regard](#).

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

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



A. Extrajudicial killing:

In October 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of 84 civilians, including 22 children and four women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of other parties. We also documented seven individuals who died due to torture. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in October 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)⁴** : 32 civilians, including seven children and three women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham⁵** : Two civilians.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army**: One civilian.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party)**: Five civilians.

⁴ 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.

⁵ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 44 civilians, including 15 children and one woman, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown source: Seven civilians, including six children.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 10 civilians.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 20 civilians, including eight children and one woman.
- Killings by unknown persons: Four civilians.
- Turkish border guards: One child.
- Turkish forces: Two civilians.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In October 2021, SNHR documented at least 204 cases of arbitrary arrests, including one child and nine 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 Syrian regime forces in the governorates of Damascus Suburbs then Raqqa. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in October 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:** 97, including one child and four women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Eight.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:** 42, including five women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 57.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

In October 2021, SNHR documented at least 14 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, 10 of which were at the hands of Syrian regime forces and allies, all in Idlib governorate.

Among these attacks, we documented one on an educational facility, and four on markets.

These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

Syrian Regime forces: 10, including six incidents which are still under investigation, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for this attack being either Syrian regime forces or Russian Forces.

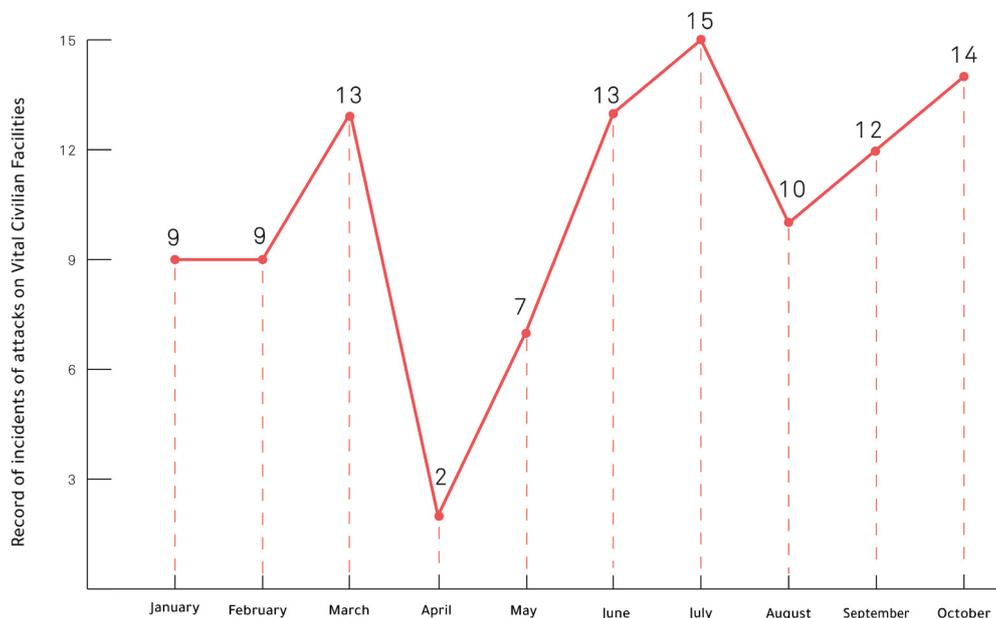
B. Other parties:

- **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** Four.

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

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party	
	Syrian Regime forces	Other parties <small>Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified</small>
Vital Educational Facilities		
Schools	1	
Communal Facilities		
Markets	2	2
Infrastructure		
Power stations and energy facilities		1
Civil Defense Centers	1	
Official Headquarters	5	1
IDP Camps		
IDP Camps	1	
Total	10	4

This shows that the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented since the start of 2021 up to November of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria has now reached 104 in total, distributed monthly as follows:



The chart shows that October saw a continued increase in the frequency of attacks on vital civilian facilities, recording the second highest number of attacks since the beginning of 2021, after July, with approximately 14% of the total. The high record of attacks in October compared to preceding two months is due to Syrian regime forces and allies' bombarding vital and densely populated areas far from the contact lines in the Idlib region, the most prominent of which were the cities of Ariha, Sar-mada and al Dana.

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

On Tuesday, October 28, 2021, unidentified gunmen used [IEDs to blow](#) up the gas pipeline linking al Jafra gas field with al Ezba al Jabsa gas field in the Badiya of the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. As a result, the pipeline sustained significant material damage, and was put out of service. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. The area was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, October 11, 2021, a car bomb of unknown source exploded in the area between Dawwar Kawa and Dawwar al Qabban at the entrance of [al Hal Market](#) in the center of Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [resulting in a massacre](#), and [causing significant](#) material [damage](#) to a [number of shops](#) and the market's entrance. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors to obtain more details of the incident. Afrin city was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.



Material damage inflicted by the explosion of a car bomb of unknown source at the entrance to al Hal market in Afrin city, Aleppo - October 11, 2021

On Saturday, October 16, 2021, at around 14:25 local time, a [building](#) containing the Sarmada Police Station and the Sarmada Personal Status Department, both belonging to the Salvation Government, in the northern outskirts of Sarmada city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, were [targeted with two shells](#) whose source haven't yet been identified by SNHR as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being Russian forces and Syrian regime forces, since the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to specifically identify the party responsible for the bombing.

[The attack](#) resulted [in casualties](#), in addition to causing [severe damage](#) to the [building](#), and inflicting significant [material damage](#) to the station's and Personal Status Department's equipment. 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.



Destruction inflicted as a result of a Syrian regime/Russian ground attack on a building containing a police station and the Personal Status Department in Sarmada city, Idlib - October 16, 2021

On Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at around 08:01, Syrian regime artillery forces began bombarding Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, coinciding with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft flying over the area, and in conjunction with the students heading to their schools. The shelling lasted for about ten minutes, during which ten shells fell on separate areas in the city center, resulting in a massacre; a number of these [shells](#) fell at the [main market](#), the [fish market](#), and near [Banat Ariha School, formerly known](#) as the Abdul Hamid Ghnaimi School, as well as at the electricity company, [causing variable material damage](#) to [these facilities](#). 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.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a detailed [report](#) on this attack in October 28.



On Monday, October 25, 2021, at around 11:40 local time, al Dana city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate was subjected to an [attack](#) with [artillery shells](#) that lasted about 13 minutes; although the source of the shells hasn't yet been identified by SNHR as of this writing, the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack are Russian and Syrian regime forces, since the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to specifically identify the party responsible for the bombing.

A [number](#) of [shells](#) fell on a [building](#) belonging to the Salvation Government, which includes both the Transportation Directorate and the al Dana Police Station, and on a yard next to the building that separates it from the adjacent Civil Defense center. The attack partially destroyed both buildings and caused moderate material damage to their equipment. Al Dana city was under the joint control of Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, October 27, 2021, at around 14:40 local time, al Doumani IDP Camp, known as [Sham al Khair Camp](#), located to the south of Termanein village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was attacked by two artillery shells whose source haven't been identified by SNHR as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being Russian forces and Syrian regime forces, since the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to specifically identify the party responsible for the bombing.

The two shells fell in the section of the camp where a number of concrete accommodation units have been built to house widows, resulting in casualties, in addition to causing [partial destruction](#) and [severe material damage to several](#) of these concrete accommodation units in the camp. 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.



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

The Syrian Network for Human Rights was unable to document any indiscriminate attacks or attacks using outlawed weapons in October.

IV. Attachments:

- (1) [Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 84 Civilians, Including 22 Children, Four Women, and Seven Victims Due to Torture, in Syria in October 2021](#)
- (2) [204 Arbitrary Arrests/ Detentions Documented in Syria in October 2021, Including One Child and Nine 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.
- All Armed Opposition factions/ 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.

All Armed Opposition factions/ 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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