

Statement

SNHR is the Primary Source in the US Department of State's Report on the Human Rights Situation in Syria 2019



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Friday, March 13, 2020

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



On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor released its annual report for 2019 on the human rights situation for various countries in the world, with the Syria section of the report reaching 69 pages, which included documentation of multiple patterns of violations of international law.

The report referred to the military escalation seen in the northwest region of Syria, and noted that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons in that military campaign, as well as referring to the most recent, still ongoing military escalation that began in December 2019, and stating that Syrian Regime forces and Russian forces have targeted infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and markets. The report also stated that Russian forces were implicated in the deaths of civilians resulting from indiscriminate airstrikes, which caused widespread destruction to infrastructure and vital civilian facilities, including medical facilities, schools and shelters.

The report talked about the significant issues of violations of international human rights law that occurred in Syria in 2019, first and foremost: unlawful or arbitrary killings by the Syrian regime, including those involving the use of chemical weapons, forced disappearances; torture, including torture involving sexual violence; arbitrary detention; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions, including denial of medical care; a lack of independence of the judiciary; prisoners of conscience; undue restrictions on free opinion and expression and journalism, and unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as including other types of violations of civil and political rights. The report confirmed that the Syrian government has taken no steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, or punish officials responsible for human rights violations or abuses.

The report focused on the fact that Syrian regime-linked groups and militias were engaged in frequent violations, including indiscriminate killings and massacres against civilians, kidnappings, sexual violence, and arbitrary detentions, emphasizing that the Syrian regime-affiliated militias, including the Lebanese Hizballah, repeatedly deliberately targeted civilians.



The report further emphasized that Russian forces are also implicated in the deaths of civilians resulting from airstrikes characterized as indiscriminate which have resulted in the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. These airstrikes, which have destroyed hospitals, shelters, markets, homes, and other integral civilian facilities, damaging medical supplies and equipment and shutting down vital health care facilities, follow a well-documented pattern of attacks with serious and deleterious humanitarian and civilian impacts.

The report spoke about violations by other parties in addition to the Syrian regime and its Russian ally, outlining violations in areas controlled by Armed Opposition factions, including killings, physical abuse and arbitrary detention.

The report emphasized that armed terrorist groups, such as al-Qaida-linked Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, have also committed a wide range of abuses, including unlawful killings, bombings, and kidnappings; unlawful detention; extreme physical abuse; and forced evacuations from homes based on sectarian identity. Despite the territorial defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in March, ISIS continued to carry out unlawful killings, bombings, and kidnappings, attack members of religious minority groups, and subject women and girls to routine rape and forced marriages.

The report further noted violations by Syrian Democratic Forces, including arbitrary arrest of civilians, as well as attacks resulting in civilian casualties, unlawful restriction of the movement of persons, and engagement in acts of corruption.

The report relied on several sources, most notably:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) as a primary source of data according to the quotes mentioned in the report, as well as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), and Human Rights Watch (HRW):

SNHR: 60 quotes

COI: 58 quotes

HRW: 28 quotes

The report also relied on other sources such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in addition to the experiences and investigations of the staff of the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.



We note that this is the eighth consecutive year on which the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has relied primarily on the Syrian Network for Human Rights in its report on the human rights situation in Syria, with the report by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor being an essential reference for various bodies in the US government, as well as for many congressmen.

In October 2019, the SNHR and the Government of the United States of America signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing for the establishment of a coordination and cooperation mechanism to share information and data documented by SNHR on human rights violations in Syria and on those involved in such violations in order to participate in the investigations carried out by the Government of the United States of America into some of these violations, and to place the greatest possible number of those involved in these violations on the lists of economic and political sanctions; this will constitute a major impediment to any effort to rehabilitate the Syrian regime in all its organs, and serve as an important form of accountability that's previously been unavailable.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights stresses that it is willing to contribute to all international reports on the human rights situation in Syria, and will make the greatest possible effort to continue to report the ongoing violations and incidents objectively and credibly to achieve the goal of protecting civilians in Syria, hold all perpetrators accountable, and help start the country along the path of change towards democracy.

To read the report by the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, please visit [the link](#)





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

