



SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

The Syrian Regime Committed a Massacre in Ariha, Killing 11 Syrian Citizens, Including Four Children, during the Constitutional Committee Meetings, to Shameful Silence from the United Nations

The Ariha Massacre, the Largest Since March 2020, Embodies the Policy of the Syrian Regime, 'Negotiating' by Terror, Killing and Enforced Disappearance

Thursday 28 October 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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Content

I. Launching Attacks on Civilians and Murdering Political Detainees during the Negotiation Rounds, a Policy the Syrian Regime Has Followed over the Past Years.....	3
II. Documenting the Responsibility of Syrian Regime Forces, with Russian Support, for the Attack on Ariha City.....	4
III. International and Human Rights Condemnations of the Ariha Massacre.....	13
IV. The Syrian Regime and Its Allies Have Killed 259 Civilians, Including 88 Children, and Have Committed 60 Attacks on Vital Facilities Since March 2020 to Date.....	14
V. Legal Qualification and Recommendations.....	20
Annex: Photos and Videos Documenting the Ariha Massacre.....	22

I. Launching Attacks on Civilians and Murdering Political Detainees during the Negotiation Rounds, a Policy the Syrian Regime Has Followed over the Past Years:

The Syrian regime has used violence, threats and terror as a basic tool in all the rounds of negotiation it has participated in. In many past reports, we have recorded the large number of violations carried out by regime forces even while these rounds of negotiations were taking place in Geneva, or during the rounds of talks on the Constitutional Committee. The following are [the most prominent reports](#) that we issued in this regard, which show the extent of the Syrian regime's disregard for the negotiation process, and its belief that it is merely passing time before once again taking its place in the international arena, as the regime has never believed in democracy, the fundamental principles of human rights or in any form of political change or progress from dynastic dictatorship towards genuine, fair and pluralistic democratic elections.



Due to the lack of any timetable to achieve a satisfactory conclusion to the work of the Constitutional Committee, and in the absence of any time limit for the completion of the political transition that has stalled for years, the rounds of talks involving the Constitutional Committee were suspended for nearly nine whole months, while on October 18, 2021, it reconvened again in the sixth round of its kind. Two days after this round of talks began, Syrian regime forces launched the largest military attack on northwest region of Syria since March 6, 2020, in terms of civilian casualties. The attack took place in the densely populated Ariha city, in a clear indication of the Syrian regime's indifference to the agreements that could result from these meetings.

Report's Methodology:

This report highlights the details of the ground attack launched by Syrian regime forces on Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib on October 20, 2021. It also provides the record of the most notable violations committed by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces since March 6, 2020, (the date of entry into force of the Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement) until October 28, 2021.

Through field researchers working for the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), we have obtained direct testimonies from survivors, relatives of victims, aid workers and media activists, bolstered by the extensive network of contacts we have built up through our ten years of work. We also relied on accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with witnesses or survivors, none of which are cited from any open sources, with this report providing three of these testimonies. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand

to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without us offering or providing them with any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, as well as providing assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias. All of this is in accordance with our internal protocols, which we have worked under for years, and we always strive to develop these to keep pace with the best levels of psychological care for victims.

SNHR also analyzed videos and photographs that were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. Videos posted by activists show, amongst other things, sites of attacks, bodies of the victims and the injured, and the extent of the significant destruction as a result of these attacks.

Furthermore, we retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in this report on a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by Syrian regime forces and some other armed groups. Readers are welcome to find out more about SNHR's [methodology](#).

The investigations detailed in this report have proved conclusively that the targeted locations were civilian areas where no military bases or armories for factions of the Armed Opposition or extremist Islamist groups were situated during or even before the attack. Also, Syrian regime forces failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks, despite such warnings being required under international humanitarian law.

The information contained in this report only represents the bare minimum of incidents which we have been able to document, and of the severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Documenting the Responsibility of Syrian Regime Forces, with Russian Support, for the Attack on Ariha City:

Ariha city, which is located in the southern suburbs of Idlib, enjoys a strategic location on the Aleppo-Latakia international motorway, known as 'M4', which runs adjacent to the city from the north, while Jabal al Zaweya area borders it from the south and east.

Ariha city has actively participated in the popular uprising for democracy since its beginnings, and witnessed dozens of demonstrations against the Syrian regime. Factions of the Armed Opposition tightened their control over it on May 28, 2015, after several attempts, due to the importance of its location in the Jabal al Arba'in area, which overlooks most of the northern and eastern areas of Idlib suburbs, with the city being currently under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.

Ahmad Saedou¹, head of the city's local council, told us that the population currently (in October 2021) is about 7,000 families from Ariha city, in addition to 3,000 IDP families from other areas, with a population of nearly 55,000 people. The city is about 10 km from the current contact lines with the Syrian regime.

The city suffers in general from a lack of basic services such as water and electricity, unemployment and the deterioration of medical conditions, as it has one hospital serving the people of the city and the Jabal al Arba'in area, in addition to some dispensaries that lack sufficient medical capabilities and provide emergency services and medical examinations only; the Salvation Government of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham supervises the service institutions in the city, which are devoid of any military features, as the military headquarters are concentrated outside it, in the Jabal al Arba'in area.

On Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at around 08:01, Syrian regime artillery forces began bombarding the city, 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 the deaths of 11 civilians, including four children and one woman (a teacher), and injured about 30 others, in addition to causing damage to four vital civilian facilities.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights obtained CCTV videos from two shops:

The first video comes from a poultry shop, located east of Dawwar al Hezb (the Party Roundabout) in the city center, [about 70 meters away](#).



The second video comes from a retail store, located in the main market, [about 260 meters \(line of sight\) east of Dawwar al Hezb in the city center](#).



Through these videos, we were able to monitor the fall of 10 shells inside the city; using the videos and through communicating with a number of city activists, we ascertained the following facts:

¹ We contacted him via WhatsApp on October 22, 2021

- At 08:01, a shell fell [in the middle of the road](#)² in front of al Mulouk Ice-cream shop, northwest of the city, resulting in the deaths of six civilians, including two children and one woman.

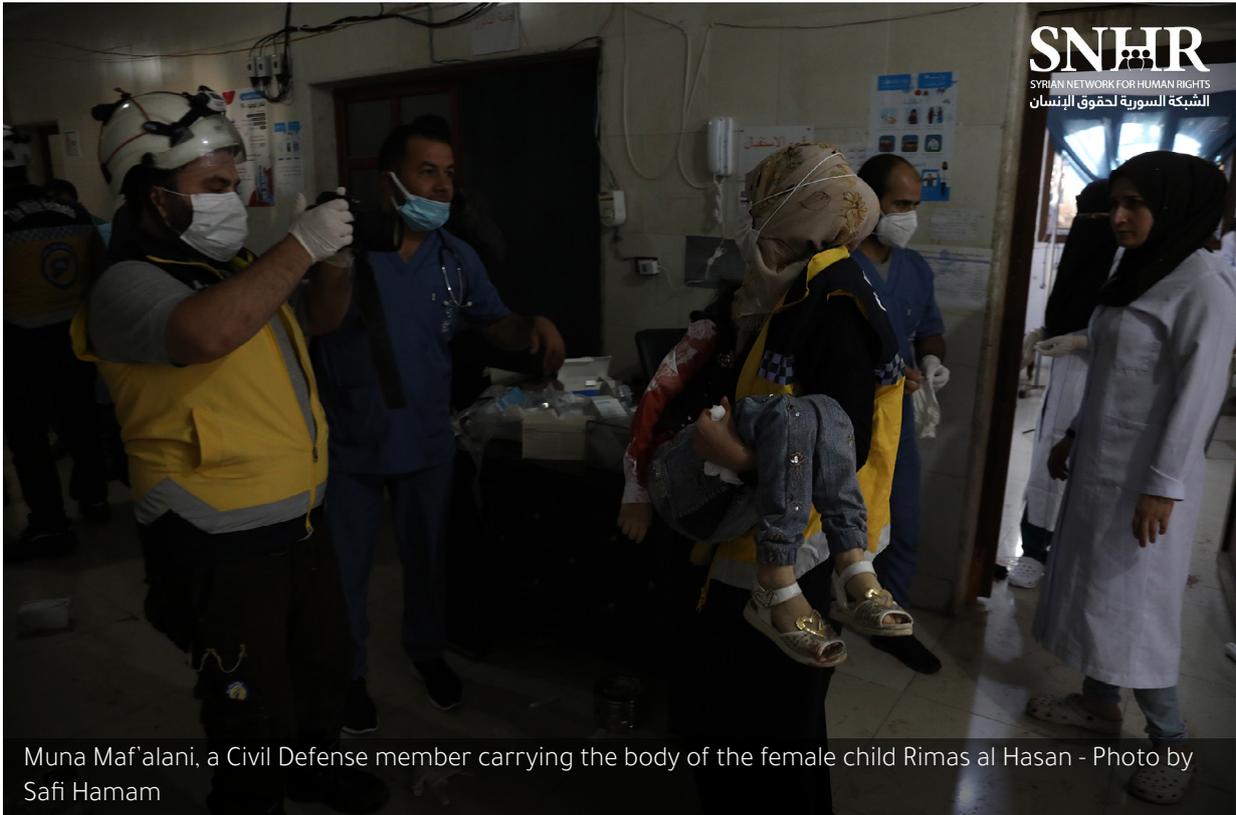


The impact site of a shell in front of al Mulouk Ice-cream shop, which resulted in a massacre - Photo by Mjd Hamo

The names of the victims on this site:

1. Ms. Qamar Belal Hafez, an Arabic language teacher at Banat Ariha School.
2. [Yousef Muhammad Jamal al Hasan](#).
3. [Female child, Rimas, daughter of Yousef Muhammad Jamal al Hasan](#).
4. [Zakarya Ahmad Bazzi](#).
5. Hasan Qaddi.
6. [Child, Islam Khaled al Saraqebi](#), an eighth-grade student, died of his injuries sustained in the attack two days later on October 22.

² On the street located between Dawwar al Hezb and Dawwar al Dalla in Ariha city



- At 08:04, the second video from the surveillance cameras installed in the retail store in the main market in the city center showed a shell falling [near the store](#), which later turned out to have fallen on a nearby building, injuring several civilians.



- At 08:05, two shells fell; the first fell [in front of the poultry shop](#)³, which is adjacent to the Banat Ariha School, formerly known as the Abdul Hamid Ghnaimi School, according to the shop's surveillance [camera](#). As a result, four civilians, including two children, were killed, and others were injured.



Photo showing the impact site of the shell in front of the poultry shop

The names of the victims on this site:

1. [Child, Omar Abdul Aal al Abboud](#)
2. [Child, Ibrahim Abdul Wahhab al Amin](#)
3. [Mahmoud Yaser al Sareh](#)
4. Ghassan Sheikh Ibrahim

The shell also injured several other civilians, including another child Ali Abdul Aal al Abboud, the twin brother of the child Omar.

³ It is located near Dawwar al Hezb in Ariha; the area is considered a gathering of a number of vital civilian facilities



The child Ali al Abboud was injured while his twin brother Omar was killed in a Syrian regime ground attack near Banat Ariha School - Photo by Omar Haj Kadour

Meanwhile, the second shell fell in front of the former dispensary building - formerly destroyed - about 30 meters east of the impact site of the first shell, which resulted in the death of a civilian identified as Hassoun Ihsan al Khadijeh, a displaced person from Ma'aret al Numan city.

The other six shells fell successively, with about one minute between each of them. The attack ended at 08:10, and we were able to locate four of the shells without knowing the sequence of their impact, with the impact sites of another two shells remaining unknown to date. The following is an outline of the shells' impact sites that we were able to locate:

- Three shells that hit the 'Buthinah Studio' area, east of Dawwar al Hezb, fell on residential buildings, causing material damage.



Aerial photo showing the impact site of two shells next to 'Buthinah Studio' - Photo by Mohamad Daboul

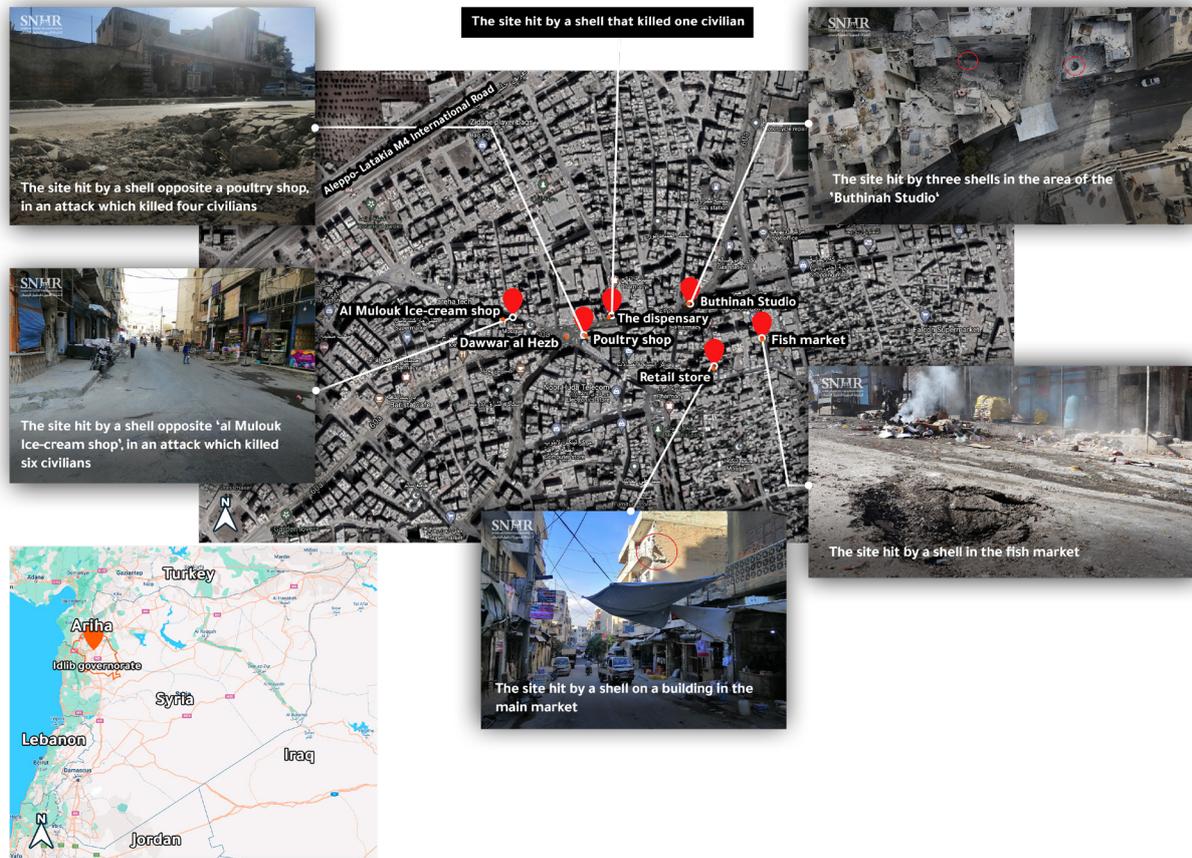


- A shell hit the [fish market](#)⁴ south of the city, injuring civilians.



⁴ It is part of al Hal market and close to the main market in Ariha

Visual analysis showing the locations of attacks launched by Syrian regime forces on Ariha city on October 20, 2021:



The SNHR contacted a number of Civil Defense personnel who went to the bombing sites that day; Hasan al Ahmad⁵, Director of the Civil Defense's Media Office of Ariha Sector, told us that he heard the sound of a shell being fired from the southeast side of the city while he was preparing to set off from his home to his workplace, followed by the sounds of several shells falling:

"I immediately went out of the house to the bombing sites, despite hearing the sound of the reconnaissance aircraft flying in the air, which could be seen with the naked eye. Then, I headed to the area of the 'Shuaibiat Halloum' shop, below the main market, where a man inside a bombed building told us that the bombing resulted in no casualties, so we headed towards Dawwar al Hezb, where I saw the victims in front of a poultry shop; the martyrs and the injured were mostly children, school students. We took the injured to the hospital".

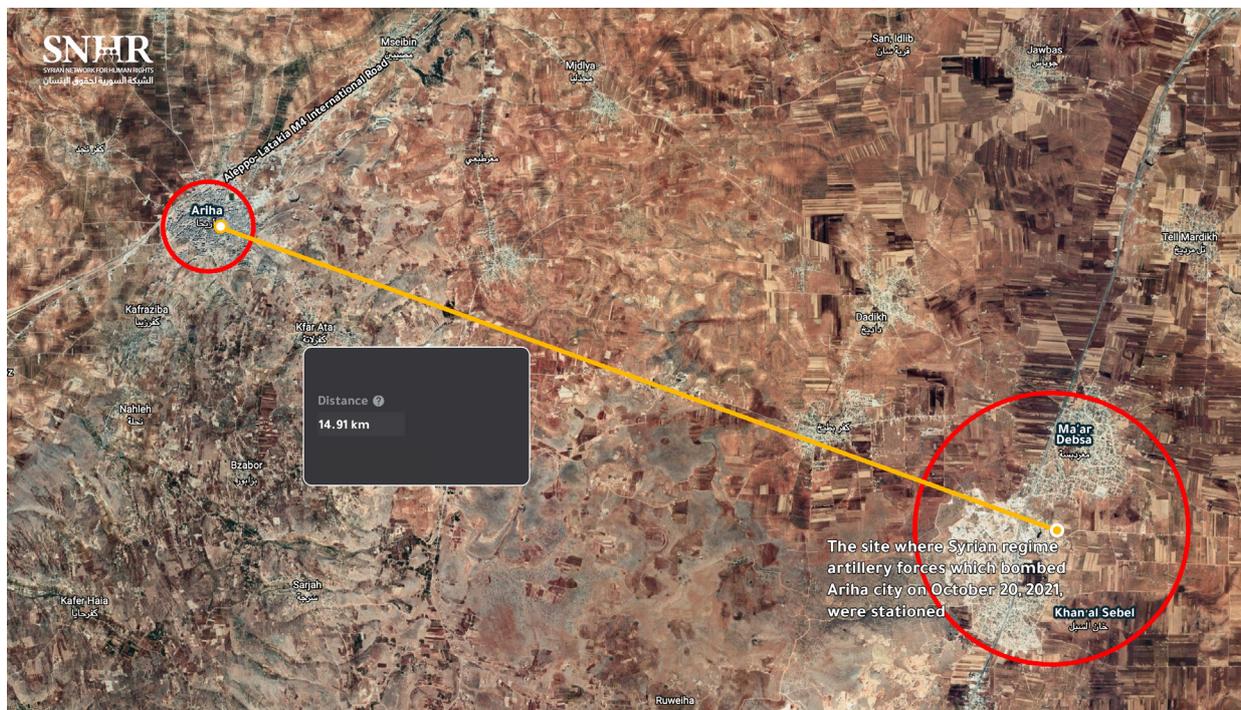
Hasan added: "We then went to the site of the 'al Mulouk Ice-cream' shop, where we removed the bodies of a female teacher and a man, and there were injured children, including school students. We took them to the only hospital in the area, where the situation was catastrophic, as the injuries were beyond the capacity of the hospital."

⁵ We contacted him via WhatsApp on October 22, 2021

The Commander of the Civil Defense team in Ariha, Samer Hariri⁶, went first to the site of the 'al Mulouk Ice-cream' shop in the city center: **"The scene was painful there, as I saw about eight people on the ground, either dead or injured. We started inspecting their bodies, transporting the injured first, and then removing the dead. Meanwhile, we were receiving calls for help via radio from the townspeople, calling us to go to Dawwar al Hezb, where shells had fallen, resulting in casualties."**

Samer confirmed that the reconnaissance aircraft did not leave the air throughout the rescue operations and that the rescue workers were afraid of renewed bombing: **"We asked for support from the rest of the Civil Defense centers to support us in hospitalizing the injured, as the only hospital in the city was unable to accommodate all cases, and the difficult injuries were transferred to other hospitals in Idlib region."**

We contacted some of the workers monitoring the air movement and bombardment, who confirmed that artillery belonging to Syrian regime forces is stationed in the area of the towns of Khan al Sebel and Ma'ar Debsa, about 15 km from Ariha city, which was the source of the bombardment that caused the massacre.



Based on all of the above, the investigations conducted by the SNHR team prove that the shelling was concentrated in an area of no more than 500 meters in diameter in the city center, with ten shells landing there, within a period not exceeding ten minutes, in the busy morning hours, while students were heading to their schools and civilians to their work, targeting a city devoid of military features; we believe that this act was deliberately carried out by the Syrian regime, with its aim being to cause the greatest number of civilian casualties, with the support of the Russian forces, which were monitoring the airspace via drones since before the attacks occurred. We also note that the SNHR's database includes records of a large number of bombardment incidents launched by Syrian regime forces on residential neighborhoods in the city over the past years, the most prominent of which was the targeting of [Ariha Surgical Hospital](#), which is the only hospital in the area, causing the displacement of most civilians from the city in February 2020.

⁶ We contacted him via WhatsApp on October 22, 2021

III. International and Human Rights Condemnations of the Ariha Massacre:

On October 20, Farhan Haq, Deputy [Spokesman](#) for the UN Secretary-General, during his daily [briefing](#) at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York, conveyed the United Nations' condemnation of the increasing hostilities in the Idlib region, northwest Syria, in recent days, calling on the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law.

On October 20, Mr. Mark Cutts, UN Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, posted a [tweet](#) on his official Twitter account, in which he spoke of shocking reports of artillery shelling launched by Syrian regime forces on Ariha city, concentrating on an area containing markets and schools as students were on their way to schools.

The UK Embassy in Damascus described the news from Idlib as harrowing, in a [tweet](#) on its official Twitter account, and said that the attack launched by the Syrian regime and its allies on civilians in Ariha city killed 10 civilians, including four children, describing it as brutal, and adding that the UK condemns these despicable acts in no uncertain terms.

On the same day, UNICEF issued a [statement](#) saying: "Attacks on civilians may be a violation of international humanitarian law. Attacks must not be directed against children. Children should be able to reach their schools safely. We repeat our calls to those fighting that children are not a target. They should be protected at all times especially in times of conflict." Save the Children also issued a [statement](#) on the incident calling on all sides to the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law, endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, and avoid targeting schools and civilian infrastructure, as well as ensuring the safety and protection of children. In their statements, the two organizations did not specify which party was responsible for the killing of the children in this attack.

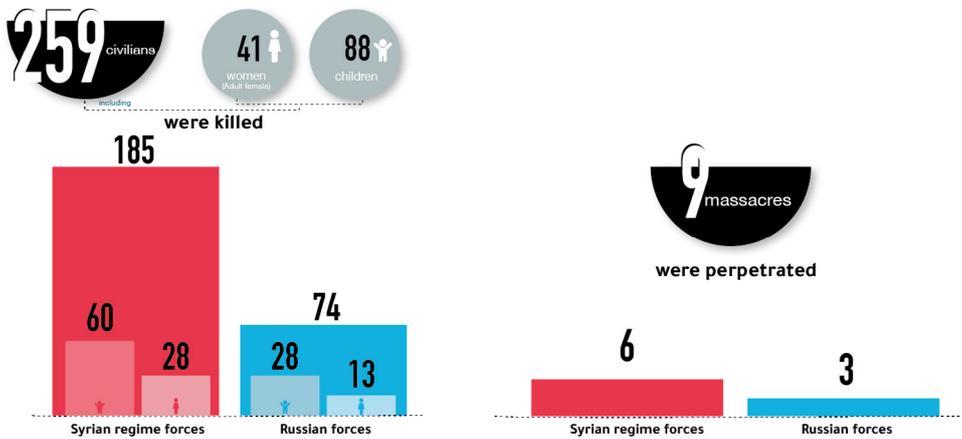
The European Union, in a [statement](#) issued on October 21, expressed the Council's concern about the increasing violence in Syria; the statement said that the previous day was one of the deadliest days in the country in recent times, adding that the only path to stability in Syria is a credible and inclusive UN-facilitated political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

The US Embassy in Damascus also deplored the upsurge in violence and attacks in Syria, referring to the events of October 20, and calling on all parties to respect existing ceasefires, focus on immediate de-escalation, and above all to protect civilian lives; this statement came in a [tweet](#) on the embassy's official Twitter account.

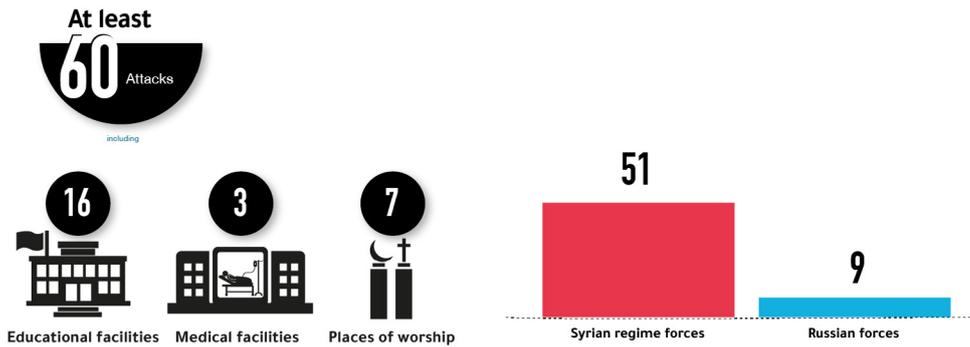
IV. The Syrian Regime and Its Allies Have Killed 259 Civilians, Including 88 Children, and Have Committed 60 Attacks on Vital Facilities Since March 2020 to Date:

The Ariha massacre is just one in a long series of violations committed by Syrian regime forces and regime’s allies in the Idlib region, one of the four de-escalation zones, which is also subject to the Russian-Turkish agreement - since March 2020. The following is an update of the death toll of civilian victims killed since March 6, 2020, and provides a record of the incidents of attacks on vital facilities that were targeted by the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies.

Extrajudicial Killing



Attacks on vital civilian facilities



A. The Record of Extrajudicial Killings:

According to the SNHR's database, attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces have resulted in the deaths of 259 civilians, including 88 children and 41 women (adult female), in northwest Syria between March 6, 2020, and October 28, 2021, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)⁷** : 185, including 60 children and 28 women.
- **Russian forces:** 74, including 28 children and 13 women.

We also documented nine massacres perpetrated during the same period, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Six.
- **Russian forces:** Three.

According to the SNHR's Victim Documentation team, the massacres documented during the same period resulted in the deaths of 64 civilians, including 24 children and 11 women. This means that 55 percent of all the victims were women and children, a very high proportion, and a clear indication that civilian residents were specifically targeted in most of these massacres.

The death toll resulting from the massacres was distributed according to the perpetrators as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 46 civilians, including 16 children and nine women.
- **Russian forces:** 18 civilians, including eight children and two women.

The following are the most notable massacres:

On Thursday, April 8, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces, stationed in Shellef Castle in the northern suburbs of Latakia, fired an MD-type anti-tank guided missile, targeting a [car](#) in which a number of civilians were traveling whilst it was at an intersection in al Najeyya village in the western suburbs of Idlib, resulting in the deaths of seven civilians, including three children (two females and one male) and two women. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, July 15, 2021, artillery forces, which we believe were Russian, in conjunction with a Russian reconnaissance aircraft overflying the area, fired a shell equipped with a Krasnopol laser guidance system targeting a group of workers who were cutting rocks, near al Manar family's swimming pool on the outskirts of al Fou'a village in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting in the deaths of six civilians](#), including three children. Al Fou'a village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

⁷ We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is that of 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, with the security branches, along with the president who rules over them, being 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.

On Thursday, July 22, 2021, a house located on Balyoun village road, on the southern outskirts of Ebleen village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was subject to a ground attack with a number of shells, whose source hasn't yet been identified by SNHR as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being either Syrian regime forces or Russian forces, as the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to identify the party responsible for the attack.

[The attack](#) resulted in [the deaths](#) of [seven civilians](#) from [one family](#), including [four children](#) and one woman, and injured nearly seven others. Ebleen village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

B. The Record of Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities:

Between March 6, 2020, and October 28, 2021, the SNHR documented at least 60 attacks on vital civilian facilities at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces in Idlib region in northwest Syria. Among these attacks, we documented 16 on educational facilities, three on medical facilities, and seven on places of worship.

These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

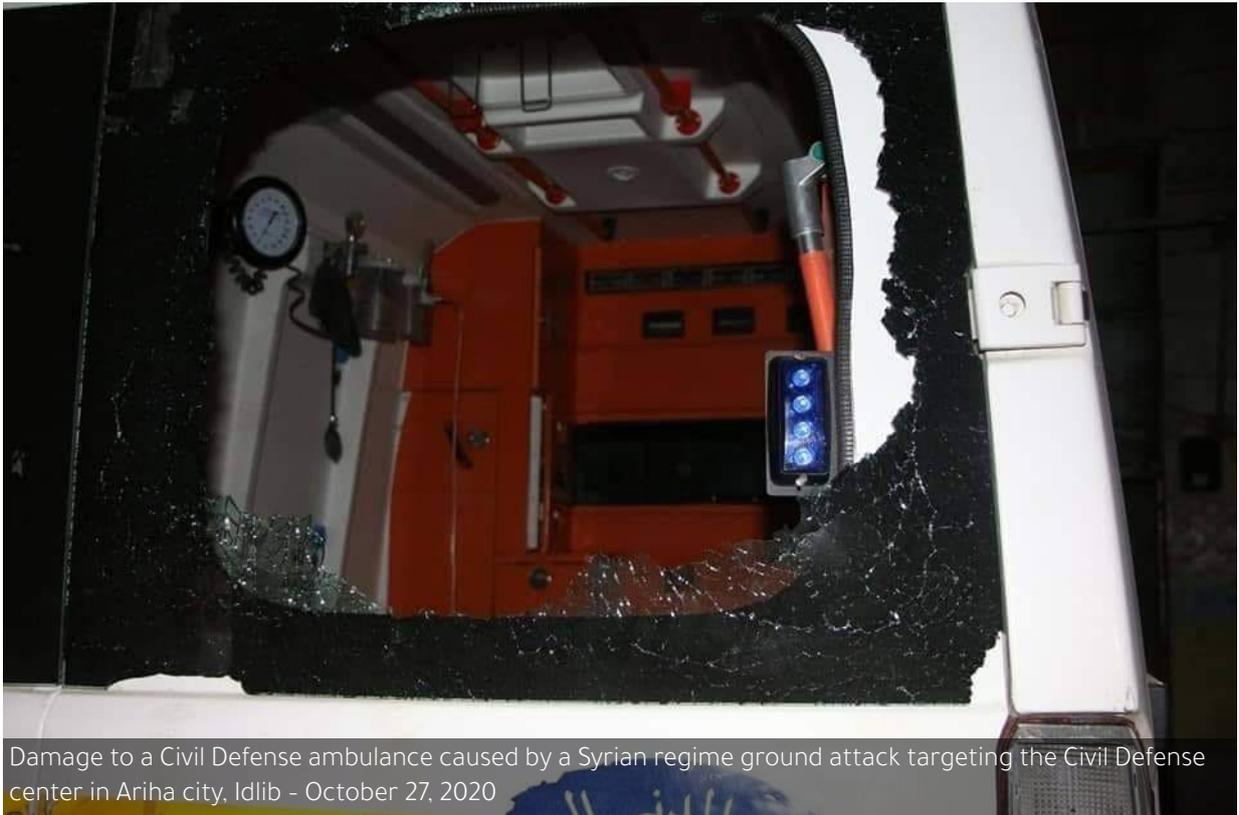
- **Syrian Regime forces:** 51.
- **Russian forces:** Nine.

The most notable attacks are:

On Tuesday, July 14, 2020, Syrian regime forces, stationed near Sareqeb city in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, used a missile launcher to fire around 12 missiles at Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with a number of these falling near al Amin Medical Complex, partially destroying one of the complex' stores, and causing moderate material damage to its building and equipment. SNHR confirms that al Amin Medical Complex is headquartered in the former carpet factory in the city. Ariha city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On the night of Tuesday, October 27, 2020, Syrian Regime artillery forces - stationed in al Hamediya military camp near Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate - fired a number of shells at Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with one of the shells hitting al Kabir Mosque in the middle of Ariha city, [partially destroying its roof](#); another shell landed in the main square inside the Civil Defense Center compound to the north of the city, causing minor material damage to [the center's building](#), in addition to [inflicting various types](#) of material damage to two [ambulances belonging](#) to it. The SNHR notes that the Civil Defense Organization is headquartered in the former garage building. 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 Civil Defense](#) Organization published a news report on the targeting of the center via its official Arabic-language Twitter account.



Damage to a Civil Defense ambulance caused by a Syrian regime ground attack targeting the Civil Defense center in Ariha city, Idlib - October 27, 2020

On the morning of Wednesday, November 4, 2020, Syrian regime artillery forces fired dozens of shells at [Ariha](#) city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate; one of the shells fell on the Martyr Zakariya Saedou School in the city, [partially destroying](#) the [schoolyard](#), and causing minor [material damage](#) to the school building. SNHR notes that the school was subjected to a previous artillery attack by the same forces on the night of Friday, October 30, 2020. 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.



Damage to Martyr Zakariya Saedou School in Ariha city, Idlib, caused by a ground attack by the Syrian regime - November 4, 2020

On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 14:45 local time, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, with some of the shells landing on the Tishreen School in al Gharbi neighborhood in the city, injuring four civilians, [in addition](#) to [partially destroying](#) a roof of one of the [school's rooms](#), as well as causing moderate material damage to the school's furniture. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Video shows the damage to Tishreen School in Ariha city, Idlib, caused by a ground attack by the Syrian regime - July 3, 2021

On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 10:00 local time, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles targeting [al Rouj al Shamali Water Station](#), located at a junction in al Namra village, near al Sheikh Yousef village in Sahl al Rouj in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, where the electronic equipment building of the Civil Defense Center - Sahl al Rouj 425 - is located. The bombing caused the [partial destruction](#) of [the station's](#) main [building](#), as well as [moderate](#) material [damage](#) to its equipment, and partial destruction of the building where the Civil Defense is based, in addition to causing significant material damage to a firefighting vehicle and a rescue vehicle belonging to the Civil Defense, with the bombing also injuring five Civil Defense personnel. The Syrian Network for Human Rights notes that the station, which has stopped working due to the lack of electricity, contains 10 pumps that are supposed to irrigate 3,500 hectares of agricultural land. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

The Civil Defense Organization published a [statement](#) on the incident on its official website.



On Tuesday, September 7, 2021, [fixed-wing](#) warplanes, which we believe were Russian, [fired missiles](#) that landed near Mariam IDP Camp in the southwestern outskirts of Ma'aret Misreen town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, injuring a number of civilians, including children, and [causing](#) moderate [material damage](#) to [several tents](#). 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.



V. Legal Qualification and Recommendations:

- The attacks by the Russian/ Syrian military alliance included in this report have resulted in the deaths of Syrian citizens, and in the injury and disability of many other people, as well as exacerbating the already extreme food and health-related suffering of the population, all of which add to the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in northwest Syria at various levels.
- The Syrian-Iranian-Russian alliance forces have unquestionably violated UN Security Council Resolutions No. 2139 and 2254 which ordered an end to indiscriminate attacks, and also violated international humanitarian law on the rules of distinction between civilians and combatants⁸.
- The evidence we have collected indicates that the attacks were deliberately directed against civilians and civilian objects, with the Syrian-Russian alliance forces committing the crime of extrajudicial killing, and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crimes of attacking civilians have been committed.
- The Syrian regime has violated the procedures established by international humanitarian law in regard to causing civilians to panic and flee, at the forefront of which are making civilians the target of attacks⁹, and launching violent and indiscriminate attacks aimed at spreading terror¹⁰.
- Neither the Russian or Syrian authorities have conducted any serious investigations into these attacks, or even into any other previous ones, with the Russian and Syrian leaderships, both military and political, bearing responsibility for these attacks based on the principle of command responsibility under international humanitarian law¹¹, as they did not prevent the attacks and did not punish those responsible. Rather, the widespread repeated attacks indicate that they can only be the actions of a state policy ordered directly by the highest levels of the Russian and Syrian leadership, which implicates them in more crimes against humanity and war crimes, and emphasizes once again that sanctions must be imposed and maintained by various states of the world that target all those involved in these barbaric attacks.
- The report issued by the delegates to the 2005 Summit states unanimously that each country has a responsibility to protect its population from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from atrocious crimes, or itself is committing such crimes as in the case of the Syrian regime, means that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner.
- The Syrian regime does not care about the political transition process because this would lead to a transition from dictatorship to democracy.

⁸ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 1, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule1

⁹ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 7, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule7

¹⁰ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 2, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule2

¹¹ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 152, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule152

ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Article 153, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule153

Recommendations:

The UN Security Council:

- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable, while UNSC states' veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.
- Impose UN military and economic sanctions on the Syrian regime, especially the leaders involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Revive the political transition process in pursuit of stability, to ensure the territorial integrity of Syria, and the dignified and safe return of refugees and IDPs.

The UN Secretary-General:

- Should clearly identify perpetrators of violations, thus contributing to condemning their actions, exposing their practices, and sending a message of solidarity to the affected communities. Ignoring any mention of the perpetrators of apparent violations simply encourages them to commit more violations and to repeat them.

International community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter incapability, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people and increase support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be applied in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- Support the political transition process and put pressure to compel the parties to implement the political transition within a time period of no more than six months so that millions of displaced people can safely and settled return to their homes.
- The SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' principle in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after exhausting all political channels from the Arab League's plan, and after Mr. Kofi Annan's plan proved fruitless. Therefore, the steps recommended under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations should be adopted and 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 situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- The Russian and Iranian regimes should face heavy fines and financial penalties for the destruction of vital buildings and facilities in Syria. These sums should be reflected in the reparations for the victims and the restoration of the facilities and buildings whose destruction the two regimes contributed to.
-

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):

- Condemn the attacks included in this report, clearly identify those responsible, and condemn their brutality.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Conduct extensive investigations into these attacks and clearly condemn them.

- Work on identifying the responsibility of individuals within the Syrian regime who are involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, publish their names to expose them to international public opinion and end all dealings with them at every political and economic level.

UN Envoy to Syria:

- Condemn and identify the perpetrators of the Ariha massacre, and emphasize that atrocious human rights violations must end in order to achieve a genuine political transition.
- Establish a serious timetable for the political transition process, rather than keeping the issue open for decades.
- Clearly assign responsibility to the party responsible for the death of the political process, and disclose to the Syrian people the timing of the end of the political transition process.

The Russian regime

- Stop supporting the war crimes and crimes against humanity which the Syrian regime has been committing for ten years, with the current support being categorized as direct involvement in these crimes.
- Reconstruct and restore the residential buildings and shops destroyed by Russian military forces, and compensate victims throughout the duration of their displacement.
- Support a genuine political process that achieves security and restores stability to the Syrian state, moving away from a dictatorial sectarian regime whose existence millions of Syrians will not accept.

Annex: Photos and Videos Documenting the Ariha Massacre:

Exclusive photos showing great damage in the city's neighborhoods - Photo by Mjd Hamo







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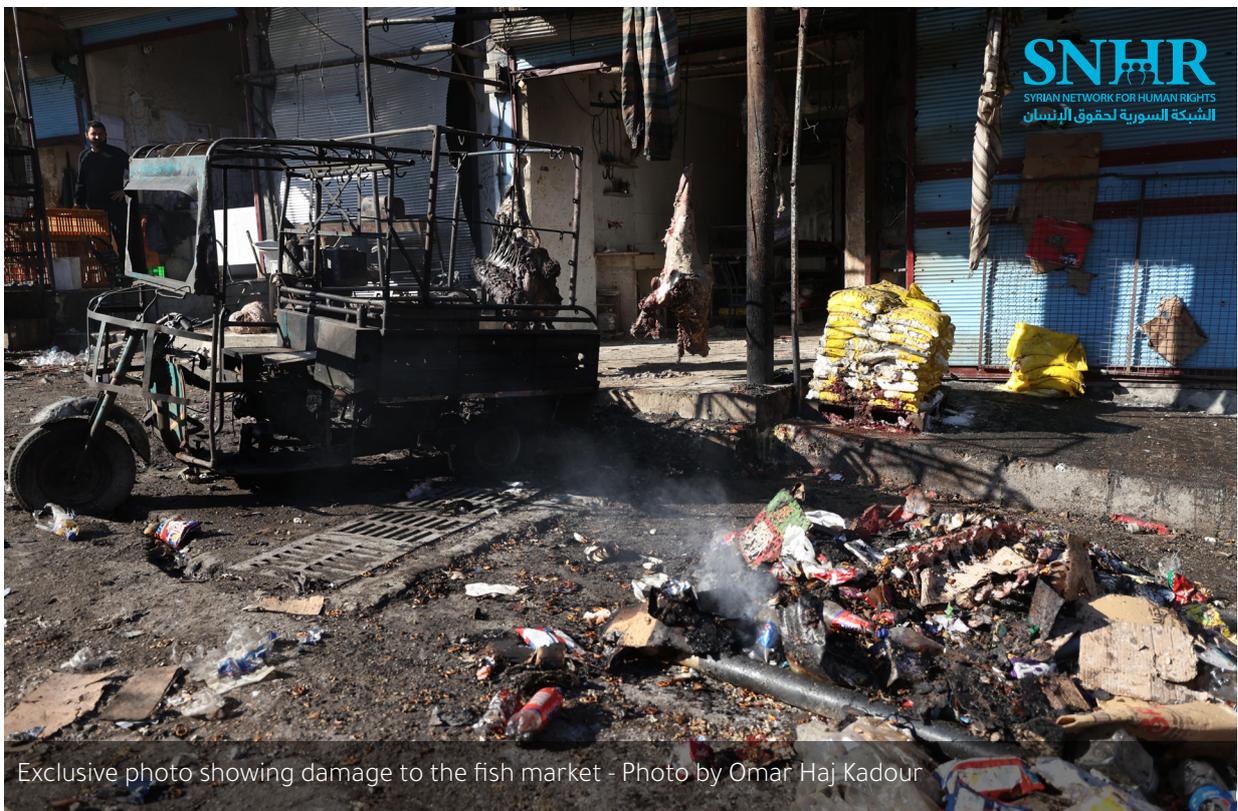
Exclusive aerial photo showing the effects of destruction on a residential building near Buthinah Studio - Photo by Mohamad Daboul

Exclusive photos showing the female child [Rimas al Hasan](#), one of the victims of the attack - Photo by Safi Hamam



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Exclusive photos showing material damage and a crater caused by the shelling of the fish market



Exclusive photo showing the impact site of a shell in front of the poultry shop

Exclusive photos from the surveillance camera in the retail store showing the first moments after it was bombed



Exclusive photos from the surveillance camera in the poultry shop showing the first moments after it was bombed

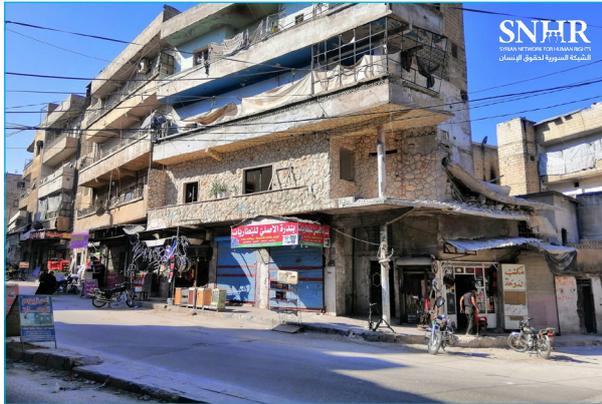




Exclusive photos showing the destruction caused by the bombing of the street in front of the al Mulouk Ice-cream shop - Taken on October 26, 2021



Exclusive photos showing the destruction caused by the bombing of the Buthinah Studio area - Taken on October 26, 2021



Video showing the panic among school children due to the bombing of the city by Syrian regime forces

Videos showing the damage to the fish market and residential neighborhoods



Acknowledgment

We would like to thank the victims' families and relatives and all the local activists from all fields who contributed effectively to this report. If it were not for their contributions and cooperation with us, we would not be able to complete this report to such an exhaustive level. In addition to this, we extend our most heartfelt condolences to the victims' families.



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