

The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in January 2020

Displacements Continue in Northwest Syria Under the Worst Humanitarian Conditions Since the Beginning of the Popular Uprising



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, February 3, 2020

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

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I. Introduction 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 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 in January 2020, and catalogues the record of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the main parties to the conflict during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights indiscriminate attacks and the use of outlawed weapons (cluster munitions, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons) and attacks on civilian objects.



The report also includes documentation of violations distributed according to the perpetrator parties responsible for each one. Accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks. On some occasions, when we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for specific attacks to one particular party, as in the case of air strikes by Syrian or Russian warplanes, Syrian-Iranian attacks, or attacks by Syrian Democratic Forces and US-led coalition, we indicate that responsibility for these attacks is held jointly by the parties in question until we are able to likely establish which one of the parties was likely responsible, or it's proved that the attack was a joint initiative carried out in coordination between the two parties. In addition, in cases where we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for a particular violation to one of two possible parties because of the area's proximity to the lines of engagement, the use of similar weapons, or other reasons, the incident is categorized among 'other parties' until we have sufficient evidence to conclusively assign responsibility for the violation to one of the two parties.

This report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on information from our extensive network of relations with various sources that have been built up over the course of our work since 2011. When we receive information or learn some news about violations via the internet or media outlets, our team works to follow up these reports and attempts to verify information and collect evidence and data. In some cases, researchers are able to visit the incident location promptly, although this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks involved, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the scarcity of human and material resources to carry out this work. Therefore, the opportunities available to access evidence vary between one case and another, and consequently the level of certainty in classification of each incident varies. SNHR's customary policy in such cases is to rely on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the Internet and media outlets. We also talk with medical personnel who treated the injured in these incidents, examined the deceased victims' bodies, and identified the cause of death. SNHR also analyzes videos and photographs that our team has documented, or which were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. These videos and photos show, amongst other things, sites of attacks, and the bodies of the deceased victims and the injured, the scale of destruction, and the remnants of the incendiary and cluster munitions and other munitions used, whilst other photos may show victims killed under torture, and victims amongst medical and media personnel who died in attacks carried out by parties to the conflict. We also retain copies of all the videos and pho-



tographs included in these reports, which are also reviewed in this report, in a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies, and we ensure always that all these data are stored with their original source. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by the Syrian Regime forces and some other armed groups. Readers are welcome to find out more about our methodology.

This report contains four accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, which are not cited from any open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided without us offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, and to provide assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias.

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. January Outline

January saw the continuation of suffering in northwest Syria and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation as a result of the continued military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces, which was accompanied by a wave of displacement that is considered the worst to date on the humanitarian level. This campaign was accompanied by Syrian-Russian alliance forces' advancement on the ground, which resulted in their seizing control of several cities and towns, the most important of which is Ma'aret al Numan city, which was brought under the control of Syrian Regime forces on the 28th of this month.

Northwest Syria underwent two ceasefire agreements in January; the first of these began on the 9th when Major-General Yuri Borenkov, chief of the Russian Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Parties in Syria, [announced](#) the start of a ceasefire in the de-escalation zone in Idlib, beginning at 14:00 on the same day; the [Turkish Ministry of Defense](#) announced the next day that it had concluded a ceasefire agreement with Russia that would enter into force at 00:01 on January 12. The first agreement didn't affect or reduce the pace of military operations in any way. Despite the second announcement, the ground attacks by Syrian Regime forces continued, with the airstrikes by Syrian-Russian alliance forces only pausing briefly until January 14, 2020, when the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR)

¹ "Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology", Syrian Network for Human Rights, <http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf>



monitoring team recorded that fixed-wing Russian warplanes bombed Khan al Sebel town in the southern suburbs of Idlib; thereafter, the bombardment and escalation continued, with Syrian Regime forces committing a massacre in Idlib city on January 15, the largest massacre perpetrated in northwest Syria in terms of human casualties since April 26, 2019, resulting in the deaths of 22 civilians. The military campaign following the second ceasefire agreement focused on the western suburbs of Aleppo, resulting in the deaths of dozens of civilians and attacks on vital civilian facilities. We issued [a report](#) outlining the most notable violations committed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces during this agreement.

Meanwhile, security chaos continued in most areas of Syria, with SNHR documenting several assassinations by unknown persons in Daraa governorate this month, as well as killings by unknown persons in most areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, which were concentrated in the Badiya of the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa; the most prominent of these was that the discovery of the bodies of 21 shepherds in separate locations in the Badyia of al Sabkha district in the eastern suburbs of Raqqa on January 5, all of whom had been shot dead; the SNHR is still trying to contact survivors or witnesses of the incident to obtain more details.

In January, Syrian Regime forces continued to pursue and arrest individuals who had settled their security situation in areas that have signed settlement agreements with the Syrian regime; we also documented arrests of individuals for making phone calls to areas outside the Syrian regime's control.

Meanwhile, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces continued to arrest activists and members of civil society groups who oppose their policies throughout January. The SDF also carried out arrests targeting children with the aim of forced conscription.

In addition to these incidents, January also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arresting activists working with civil society groups, as well as media activists and other civilians, with most of these arrests occurring due to the publication of reports on social media accounts criticizing the HTS's management of areas under its control.

Factions of the Armed Opposition also continued carrying out arrests and kidnappings in January, most of which occurred on a mass scale, in many cases targeting several members of the same families.



The SNHR team monitored the establishment of two new observation posts by Turkish forces in the vicinity of Saraqeb city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, the first of which was established on January 28, south of the city, on the opposite side of Jobas village on the M5 International Road, while the second was established on the 30th of January at the northern outskirts of the city, at the junction of the M4 Latakia-Aleppo International Road and the M5 Damascus-Aleppo International Road north of the city.

The displacement wave seen in northwest Syria this month was the worst to date on the humanitarian level in light of the shrinking number of areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces and the atrocious weather conditions, along with the weak response of humanitarian organizations. On January 30, OCHA [issued](#) its seventh report on the humanitarian situation in northwest Syria, in which it stated that approximately 390,000 people were displaced from December 1, 2019, to January 29, 2020, adding that most of those displaced since January 15 had previously been displaced more than once.

On January 10, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution extending the authorization for the mechanism that allows cross border delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria, but only for six months and only through two border crossings with Turkey. This came after Russia and China vetoed the renewal of Security Council Resolution 2449, which required that the United Nations be re-authorized to provide aid to Syria using border crossings, which are not controlled by Syrian Regime forces, on December 20, 2019.

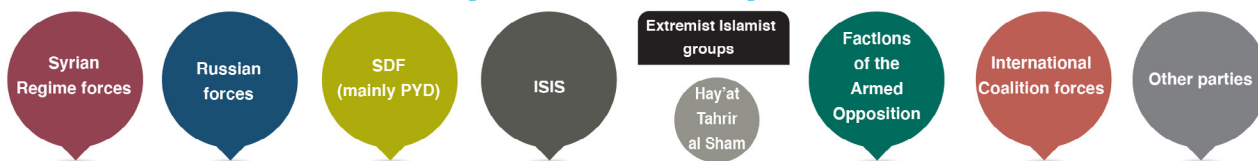
The Syrian regime used barrel bomb weapon on civilian areas intensively in the past month as part of its now-standard scorched earth policy to make advances on the ground; we also recorded in January that this weapon was used in Aleppo governorate for the first time since February 2018. The Syrian regime also used cluster munition weapons; we documented the use of this weapon at the beginning of last month on a civilian area of Sarmin city in the southern suburbs of Idlib, which includes a school and an IDP shelter, which resulted in the deaths of nine civilians, most of whom were children and women.

III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in January

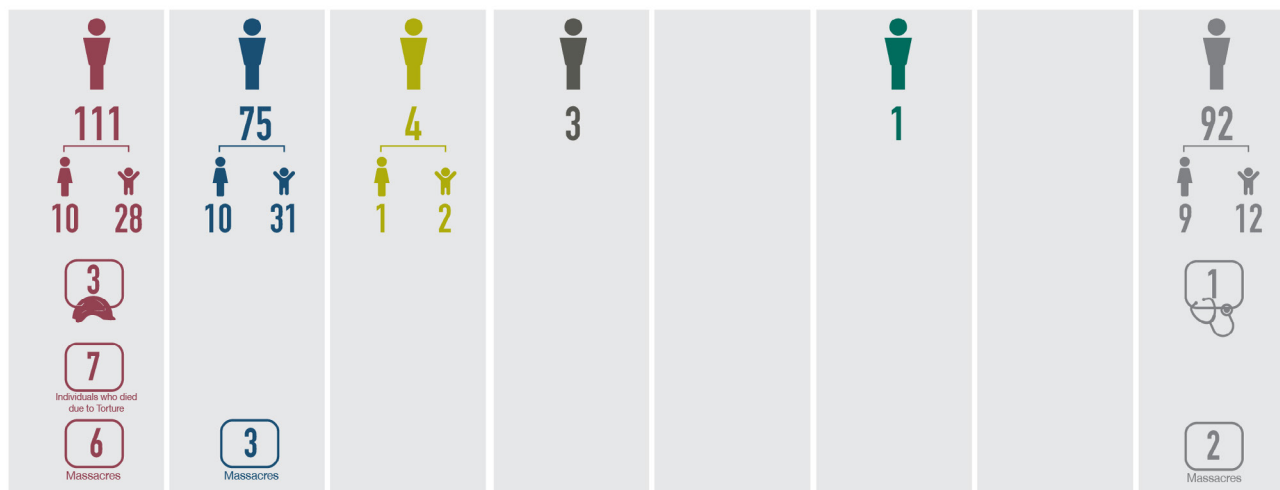
This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in January 2020 at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria.



Record of the Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in January 2020



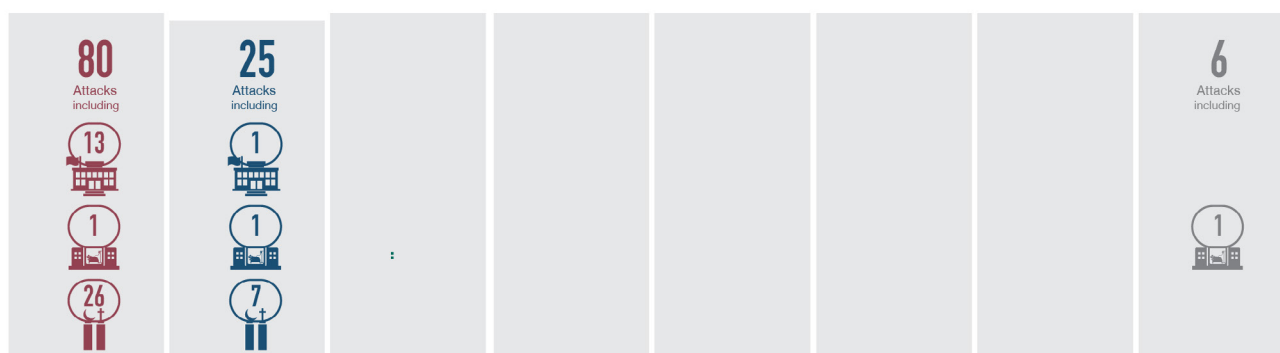
Extrajudicial Killing



Arbitrary Arrests and Unlawful Detention



Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities



Record of Indiscriminate Attacks and Attacks Using Outlawed Weapons



At least 353 barrel bombs were dropped by the Syrian Regime air force, resulting in the deaths of 5 civilians, including 1 child, 2 women (adult female), and 1 civil defense member



A. Extrajudicial killing:

In January 2020, SNHR documented the deaths of 286 civilians, including 73 children and 30 women (adult female), the largest percent of whom were killed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces; among the victims were one medical worker and three Civil Defense personnel. We also documented the deaths of seven individuals due to torture, and at least 11 massacres. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in January at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the main perpetrator parties as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 111 civilians, including 28 children and 10 women.
- **Russian forces:** 75, including 31 children and 10 women.
- **ISIS:** Three.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** One.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Four, including two children and one woman.

B. Other parties:

Shelling from unknown source: Six civilians, including three children and one woman.

Landmines of unknown origin: Seven civilians, including three children.

Fires of unknown source: 57 civilians, including three children and four women.

Turkish border guards: Three civilians, including one woman.

Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Six civilians, including two children.

Killings by unknown persons: Nine civilians, including three women.

Drowning: Four civilians, including one child.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In January 2020, SNHR documented at least 161 cases of arbitrary arrests, including two children and one woman (adult female), at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Damascus Suburbs and Deir Ez-Zour governorates. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in January 2020 at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria.



These arrests are distributed according to the main perpetrator parties, as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 69, including one woman.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - o **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Three.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 37.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 52, including one two female children.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

SNHR documented at least 111 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities in January, 105 of which were carried out at the hands of Syria-Russian alliance forces, mostly in Idlib governorate.

Among these attacks, we documented 14 on schools, three on medical facilities and 33 others were on places of worship.

These attacks are distributed according to the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 80.
- **Russian forces:** 25.
- **Other parties:** Six attacks, distributed as follows:
 - **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** Four.
 - **Shelling from unknown source:** Two.



The record of attacks documented in January on vital civilian facilities is distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party			
	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Other parties	
			Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified	Shelling from unknown source
Places of Worship				
Mosques	26	7	-	-
Vital Educational Facilities				
Schools	13	1	-	-
Educational Institutions	2	-	-	-
Universities	2	-	-	1
Nurseries	2	-	-	-
Vital Medical Facilities				
Medical Facilities	1	1	1	-
Vital Cultural Facilities				
Museums	1	-	-	-
Communal Facilities				
Markets	12	-	1	1
Playgrounds and stadiums	-	1	-	-
Infrastructure				
Power stations and energy facilities	-	-	1	-
Civil Defense Centers	9	6	-	-
Water facilities and related resources	2	1	-	-
Official Headquarters	4	3	-	-
Bakeries	1	2	-	-
Means of transport	-	-	1	-
Industrial facilities	1	2	-	-
Civil society organizations	2	-	-	-
IDP Camps				
IDP camps	2	1	-	-
Total	80	25	4	2



The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities that we were able to document in January:

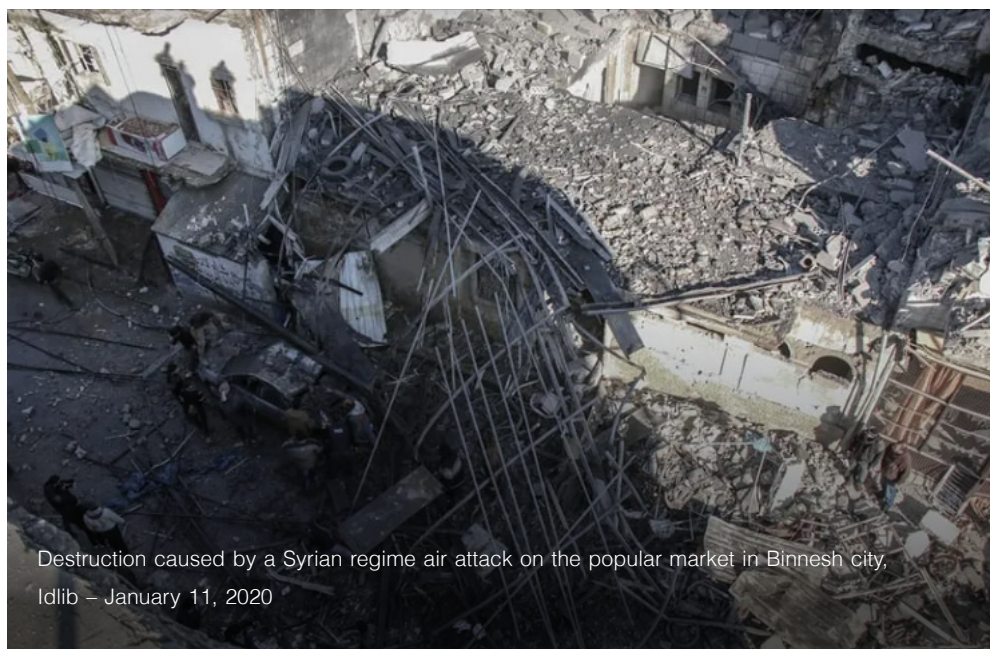
On Sunday, January 5, 2020, at around 13:00, fixed-wing Syrian regime (Su-24) warplanes fired two missiles that landed near al Muslim al Saghir Kindergarten located near al Hadidi Mosque in al Gharbi neighborhood in Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, causing significant material damage to the kindergarten's building and furniture. 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 Tuesday, January 7, 2020, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to shell [al Hamediya al Qadim Mosque](#) in al Hamediya village, located in the southwest of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [severely destroying](#) the [mosque's building](#), and [causing significant](#) material damage to its furniture. Al Hamediya village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, January 8, 2020, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to shell Ma'aret al Numan Central Hospital - known as the [National Hospital](#), which was functioning as an emergency unit - in Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying](#) the [hospital's building](#) and [sections](#), and causing [moderate material](#) damage to [its equipment](#) and [water tanks](#). We note that the hospital is the only medical facility currently serving the Ma'aret al Numan area where most medical facilities have either suspended their operations or been completely put out of service due to the ongoing campaign of military escalation by Syrian- Russian alliance forces on the fourth de-escalation zone since April 26, 2019. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, January 11, 2020, fixed-wing Syrian regime (MiG-23) warplanes fired missiles at the popular market in the center of Binnesh city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying](#) a [number of shops](#), and [causing significant material damage](#) to the [market facilities](#). Binnesh city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



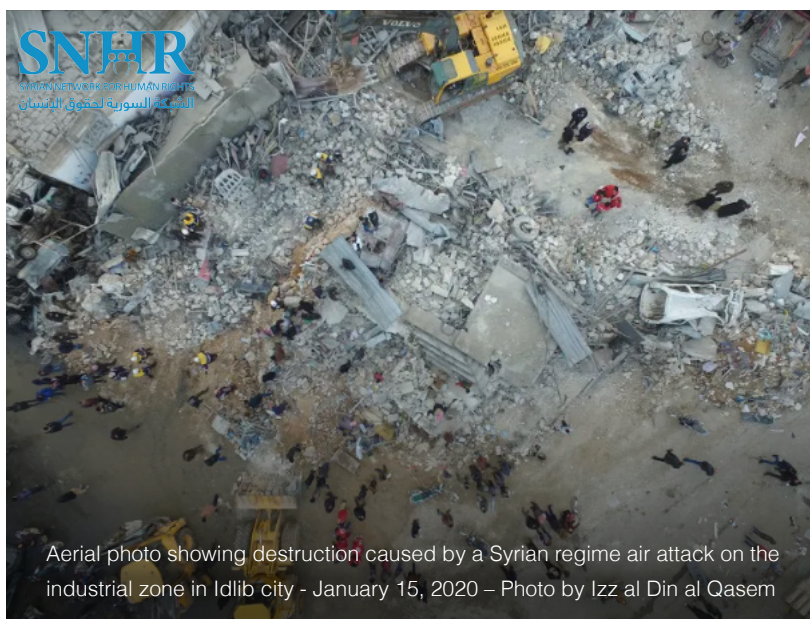


On Sunday, January 12, 2020, an IED from an unknown source exploded in [al Hal Market](#) in Tafas city in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate, causing significant material damage to a shop. We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. Tafas city was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, January 12, 2020, a number of rocket shells fired by so-far unidentified perpetrators fell on a number of neighborhoods of Aleppo city. One of the rocket shells hit [al Ittihad Private University](#) in al Shahbaa al Jadida neighborhood, resulting in the death of a student at the Information Engineering Faculty, [in addition](#) to [causing moderate material damage](#) to [the university's building](#) and [furniture](#). We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. Aleppo city was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at around 14:05, fixed-wing Syrian regime (MiG-23) war-planes fired two missiles at Idlib city, one of which landed in the middle of the industrial zone located to the south of al Hal Market near al Mehrab roundabout east of the city, resulting in a massacre, [in addition](#) to [causing significant destruction](#) to a number of industrial shops in the area. Idlib city was under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles that landed near al Rawda Mosque, located near al Jadid Market in the center of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, causing moderate [material damage](#) to the mosque's building and furniture. We note that this attack took place on the third day of the declared ceasefire agreement between Russia and Turkey in the fourth de-escalation zone, which entered into force at 00:00 on Sunday, January 12, 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.

On Friday, January 17, 2020, at around 11:00, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles that landed near the Einjara automatic Bakery to the east of [Einjara](#) village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, partially destroying the bakery building, and causing moderate material damage to its equipment. Einjara village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, January 17, 2020, at around 11:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at an IDP shelter located in an area in the vicinity of Kafr Naha village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in casualties, in addition to causing significant material damage to the shelter. We note that IDPs shelter was located in the building that formerly housed the Beauty Factory (Ansar International Hospital). 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 Tuesday, January 21, 2020, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles that landed near the elevated main water tank on the outskirts of Jedraya village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in casualties, and causing moderate [material damage](#) to the tank. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, January 23, 2020, at around 09:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at an area of al Hajj Road, located at the foot of Jabal al Arba'in in the eastern outskirts of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while Civil Defense teams, Ariha Center, was inspecting the site following a previous bombing by the same forces there; [one of the missiles](#) directly hit the team's ambulance, igniting a fire that caused [significant material](#) damage to the vehicle, putting it out of service. 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.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) published a news report on the incident via its official account on 'Twitter'.



Civil Defense ambulance burning as a result of an air attack, which we believe was Russian, east of Ariha city, Idlib - January 23, 2020



On Thursday, January 23, 2020, at around 08:40, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a missile at the Mazra'et Khan al Sebel School in the southern outskirts of Khan al Sebel village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the school building](#), and causing significant material damage to its furniture. Khan al Sebel village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Destruction caused by a Syrian regime air attack on the Mazra'et Khan al Sebel School in Khan al Sebel village, Idlib – January 11, 2020

On Sunday, January 26, 2020, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on a house in Bazabour village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while a Civil Defense team was there helping the residents to leave the village for a safer place, resulting in casualties, in addition to causing moderate material damage to a [crane-type vehicle](#) belonging to the Civil Defense team. Bazabour village 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](#) published a news report on the incident via its official account on 'Twitter'.

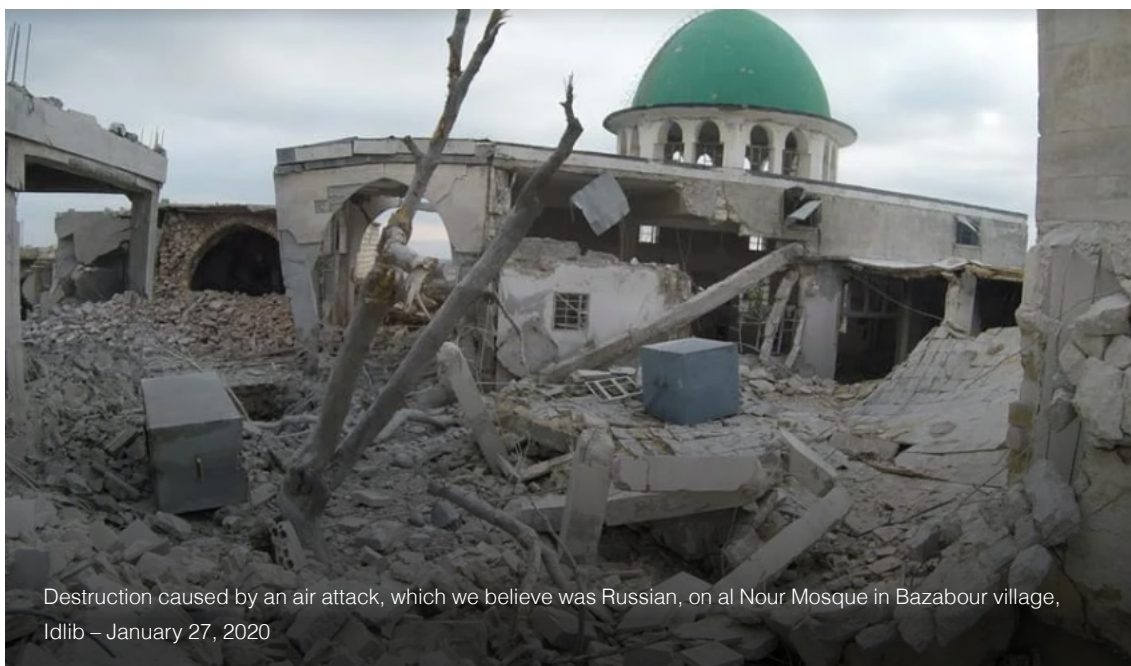
On Sunday, January 26, 2020, at around 04:10, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at al Iman Hospital in the east of [Sarja](#) village in Jabal al Zaweya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, injuring a number of civilian reviewers at the hospital, [in addition to severely destroying the hospital's building](#), and [causing significant material damage to its equipment](#), putting it out of service. Sarja village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Destruction and damage caused by an air attack, which we believe was Russian, on al Iman Hospital in Sarja village, Idlib – January 26, 2020

On Monday, January 27, 2020, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles that landed near al [Nour Mosque](#) in Bazabour village in Jabal al Zaweya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [severely destroying the mosque building](#), and causing [significant material](#) damage to its furniture. We note that the mosque was previously attacked by fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes on Saturday, December 21, 2019. Bazabour village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Destruction caused by an air attack, which we believe was Russian, on al Nour Mosque in Bazabour village, Idlib – January 27, 2020



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

SNHR documented at least three cluster munition attacks in January, all carried out by Syrian Regime forces in Idlib governorate. These attacks resulted in the deaths of nine civilians, including six children and two women, and injured 22 persons.

The Syrian Regime's air force, including helicopters and fixed-wing warplanes, also dropped at least 353 barrel bombs, distributed as follows:

- Idlib governorate: 269
- Aleppo governorate: 82
- Hama governorate: Two.

These attacks using barrel bombs resulted in the deaths of five civilians, including one child, two women and one Civil Defense member, and at least 21 attacks on vital civilian facilities, including four on schools and seven on places of worship.

The following are the most notable indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons that we were able to document in January:

On Wednesday, January 1, 2020, at around 11:43, Syrian Regime forces used a missile platform, which we believe was stationed in Abu al Dhuhour area in the eastern suburbs of Idlib, to fire a [Tochka 9M79 missile loaded](#) with 9N24 cluster munitions, which fell on al Sharqi neighborhood of Sarmin city in the eastern suburbs of Idlib. Most of the submunitions spread across a civilian area that includes a school, a Sharia institute and a shelter center for IDP families from southern suburbs of Idlib. The shelling resulted in the deaths of nine civilians, including six children and two women, and injured at least 20 others.

Some submunitions also spread in the main market of Sarmin city and near al Fardous and Othman bin Affan Mosques, with their explosions causing varying material damage to the market facilities and the two mosque buildings.

On Friday, January 10, 2020, between 23:11 and 23:47, Syrian Regime forces used a missile launcher to fire a number of [Urgan 9M27K missiles](#) loaded with cluster munitions on Sarja village in Jabal al Zaweya in southern suburbs of Idlib. The missiles fell among civilian houses and on the outskirts of the village, injuring two civilians. The area was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.





Remnants of an Urgan 9M27K cluster incubator which was fired by Syrian Regime forces using a missile launcher on Sarja village, Idlib - January 10, 2020

On Saturday, January 11, 2020, Syrian regime helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on the Syrian Civil Defense's center of Ma'aret al Numan sector in Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the center's building](#), and [causing severe material damage to its equipment](#). We note that the Civil Defense is based in the former firefighting building. Ma'aret al Numan 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](#) published a news report on targeting the center via its official account on 'Twitter'.

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, causing material damage to public and private properties. We note that the village has been empty of most of its residents due to their displacement as a result of continuous attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on the region since April 26, 2019, which in recent days had focused on Ma'aret al Numan and its environs. Kfarrouma village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





On Tuesday, January 25, 2020, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of [barrel bombs](#) on al Hamira village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which caused material damage to public and private properties. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

IV. Attachments

[286 Civilians, including Four Medical and Civil Defense Personnel, Documented Killed in Syria in January 2020](#)

[At least 161 Cases of Arbitrary Arrests Documented in Syria in January 2020](#)

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, arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance. 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 by Russian or US-led coalition forces prior to any attack in accordance with 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 leads 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 alliance of US-led coalition and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Extremist Islamist groups have violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition 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:

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 including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been repeatedly proven.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians’ lives and to save the Syrian people’s heritage and historical artefacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions 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 persons 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.

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 since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict.
- Train Syrian organizations to undertake clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the dangers of such ordnance.



- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

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

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

The United Nations special envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of 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.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Reveal the fate of some 83,000 Syrian citizens arrested by the security services whose fate has been concealed to date.
- 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 the 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.
- Stop using incendiary weapons in populated areas, compensate the victims and their families for all human and material damage caused by the use of these weapons, and provide treatment for dozens of civilian casualties.
- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 83,000 people forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime.

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

- The states of the coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Rather than attempting denial, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those affected.
- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.
- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF violates the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.
- 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.

Armed Opposition factions

- Armed Opposition factions 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.
- Pledge to cease any arbitrary arrests, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- 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.

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