

The Most Notable Violations Against the Humanitarian Field During the Conflict in Syria

1,109 Humanitarian Workers Have
Been Killed in Eight Years,
and 3,984 Others Are Still Detained

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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

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I. Introduction

The internal armed conflict in Syria is characterized by unprecedented challenges to humanitarian organizations and to their personnel. This is considered one of the worst conflicts in the world in terms of its repercussions on these organizations, not only in terms of obstructing their operations and disrupting their functions, but also in their being targeted in deliberate and repeated bombardment and attacks. This has come as a shock to a large number of workers in the humanitarian, human rights and media fields, with the Syrian Regime's forces not only besieging areas inhabited by tens or hundreds of thousands of people, but also preventing local and international humanitarian organizations from delivering humanitarian aid and providing medical services, and even specifically targeting the centers providing these services within those besieged areas. In this aspect, the Syrian regime surpasses many other violent dictatorial regimes in terms of the sheer level of brutality. Russian forces adopted the same approach after their intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, deliberately bombing medical centers, and centers of the Civil Defense within and outside the besieged areas.

International humanitarian law is clear in granting powers to provide relief work of a humanitarian nature in both domestic or international armed conflicts, particularly when civilians are suffering from a scarcity of essential supplies such as medical and food items, which has happened in dozens of areas and cities in Syria since March 2011 up to the present; these powers are clearly stated in Protocol 2, Article 18-2, Geneva Convention 4, Articles 17, 23 and 59, Protocol 1, Article 70. This right has turned into a standard subsidiarity rule



of customary humanitarian law, under which Rule 55 states that: “The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control.” Rule 56 states: “The parties to the conflict must ensure the freedom of movement of authorized humanitarian relief personnel essential to the exercise of their functions. Only in case of imperative military necessity may their movements be temporarily restricted “

The Syrian Network for Human Rights has documented since March 2011 that humanitarian personnel and centers have been subjected to systematic and widespread targeting. These personnel are not only targeted for killing, with harassment also extending to persecution, often with the objective of detaining, torturing and too often forcibly disappearing the individual in question. Finally, humanitarian workers have been targeted in Syria during the course of their duties whilst rescuing wounded people and recovering the bodies of those killed in shelling or by other means.

The Syrian regime and its allies aim to target humanitarian organizations and their personnel in order to terrorize and deter any person wishing to perform such dangerous work, because this work makes such a vital contribution to strengthening the resilience of society. The Syrian regime wants to inflict the greatest possible harm and suffering, both physical and psychological, on all civilians who oppose it. We have documented the suffering of many Syrian citizens, the sick and the wounded, and also the deaths of vast numbers due to the prevention of the delivery of humanitarian aid and the bombing of aid centers operating there, leading to the loss of medical and food items.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:

“It may be possible to imagine preventing the delivery of humanitarian aid, which includes a fundamental violation of human rights, but it is very difficult to imagine a regime that repeatedly bombs the humanitarian organizations, and persecutes and kills their personnel. The brutality has reached a frightening level. The task of saving and rescuing civilians has become an act that itself causes death, which is the main objective of the Syrian regime in targeting the humanitarian organizations; to achieve the greatest possible suffering for civilians by preventing anyone from saving them. “



Methodology:

This report reviews the records of the most notable violations against humanitarian workers and related facilities from March 2011 to March 2019. It reviews examples of these incidents in order to provide a picture of the material and human losses suffered by the humanitarian sector operating in Syria.

According to the methodology of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, humanitarian workers include those working in the medical field, such as doctors, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists, phlebotomists and other specialists and experts in various medical specialties, as well as administrative staff, and those working in the operation and transport of medical supplies, Civil Defense personnel and, finally, humanitarian workers. The term vital humanitarian centers is here a reference to medical centers, Civil Defense centers, related facilities and relief convoys.

This report draws firstly upon the ongoing daily monitoring and documentation of news and developments by SNHR's team, and secondly on accounts from survivors, witnesses and local media activists who we contacted via phone or social media platforms. We also analyzed videos and photographs posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. Videos broadcasted by local activists show, amongst other things, vast destruction of vital medical, Civil Defense, and Red Crescent facilities. We retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in this report in a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies. Readers are welcome to find out more about our methodology¹.

Our investigations confirm that all of the attacks included in this report targeted civilian areas where we documented no military presence or armories before or during the attacks, and in which the degree of force used by the perpetrators did not take into account the principle of proportionality in the use of force, meaning that many of these attacks constitute war crimes. Also, we recorded that the perpetrators failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks as required by international humanitarian law.

This report contains examples of the accounts we document; we have included five first-person accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, none of which are 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.

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> accessed date: 3 March 2019



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. The Most Important Challenges of Humanitarian Work in Syria:

We noted that the targeting of humanitarian workers and their equipment has been a tactic adopted by the Syrian regime since the early days of the popular uprising in March 2011, with the regime persecuting medical personnel, hospitals and doctors, who provide aid to those injured in the demonstrations and targeting anyone providing medical supplies or medicines for treatment. We, in the Syrian Network for Human Rights, are still suffering from the enforced disappearance of a doctor - a valued volunteer member of our team – who was forcibly disappeared in Damascus city in January 2012 in retaliation for his carrying out medical relief work and who is still missing until now.

The Syrian regime, which recognizes the vital role of humanitarian workers in alleviating the suffering of civilians, planned carefully to prosecute and arrest not only the guilty but also the innocent, not only those involved in providing humanitarian aid, but also those who are suspected of working in cooperation with them. Syrian Regime forces have also besieged and stormed many hospitals, clinics and field hospitals, which provided assistance and medical treatment to those wounded of demonstrations, abducting many of the injured from inside these hospitals and arresting medical staff. This was in a brief way the nature of the first phase in terms of humanitarian work conditions for individuals and organizations in areas under the control of the Syrian regime.

Noor al Khatib, director of the Detainees Department at the Syrian for Human Rights and one of the founders of the medical system in Hama, said: “ **After three days of the visit of the Arab Observer Mission to Bab Kebli neighborhood in Hama and the field hospital there, exactly on January 25, 2012. Syrian Regime forces attacked the neighborhood from several axes, and began shelling it using mortar shells, coinciding with clashes on the outskirts of the neighborhood with elements of the Free Army. The bombing that lasted until late at night resulted in the death of an elderly man, and injured about 20 civilians. The next morning, the Syrian regime forces stormed the neighborhood and burned the field hospital.**

The field hospital in al Hamidiya Neighborhood was also shelled by the Syrian Regime forces who subsequently burned it and placed weapons in it. Then they brought in the affiliated media who portrayed the hospital as a den of terrorists. “



In the next stage, with the Syrian authorities losing control over areas of the Syrian territory, the work of the humanitarian organizations expanded and each resorted to registering in and attaining a license from other nations in one of the countries of the world after the Syrian regime refused to authorize any relief organization beyond its security authority. Those organizations started to open centers in these areas, many of which have been adopted, such as the local partner organizations of the United Nations. However, they continue to face major challenges, especially with regard to the deliberate aerial bombardment by the Syrian Regime forces, targeting the headquarters of the organizations and their personnel working in the field. We have recorded on many occasions that the bombing of civilian areas and the perpetration of massacres coincides with the bombing of medical and relief centers in order to prevent those organizations from providing assistance when they are most needed.

As a blatant example of this particular situation, please see [our report](#), which explains the actions of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces prior to and during the chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun on April 7, 2017.

The most prominent difficulties have arisen as a result of the Syrian regime and its Russian allies' use of barbaric tactic in bombing, the forces not only bomb the area, but in many of the attacks they deliberately re-bomb the same point again after a few minutes, in order to kill all those who try to save the victims of the first attack, which is the so-called dual² strike policy, in which the victims are often from medics and Civil Defense elements.

In addition to this, there is a challenge of another kind, whose reasons remain unknown and need to be further investigated. That is the Syrian regime and its Russian ally have bombed hospitals, which the medical organizations have handed over their coordinates to the United Nations in order to avoid bombing and ensuring their safety.

The destructive power of the weapons used by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces has caused considerable material damage to those facilities, and many have been put out of service despite the fortification of the facilities operating in the field, and the establishment of some of them in basements and caves.

² A policy used by the Syrian and Russian regimes, and is based on the principle of re-bombing the same targeted site after several minutes in order to inflict as many casualties as possible from Civil Defense personnel, rescue teams and doctors.



The SNHR contacted Mr. Mohammad al Samman³, Director of al Rahma Hospital in Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. He told us: “ **The Russian and Syrian warplanes targeted the hospital about 12 times, using all kinds of missiles, causing variable material damage to the building of the hospital and its equipment, despite being highly fortified. It was put out of service for a few hours or days and then we rehabilitated it as soon as possible because it is the only hospital in the area. The repetitive targeting caused minor cracks in the roof of the cave, in which the hospital was established, On Thursday, February 8, 2018, two Russian warplanes carried out more than eight successive attacks on the hospital using missiles with a large destructive effect that had never been used previously in the bombing of the hospital, and targeted the roof and the gate mainly; which caused the death of two of the hospital’s personnel, as well as the collapse of part of the cave roof, in addition to the closure of the main and auxiliary gates of entry to the hospital. We were trapped inside the hospital until we were able to use simple drilling tools for digging a hole in the wall, then we went out of it** “ Mohammad added that the hospital was completely put out of service after this incident.

In addition to the Syrian-Iranian-Russian regimes, other parties have engaged in practices that posed challenges of a different kind to the humanitarian organizations and their workers in Syria. Elements affiliated with ISIS stormed field hospitals, dispensaries, Red Crescent centers, and relief warehouses, and kidnapped injured, doctors and paramedics. In addition, ISIS prevented some doctors from practicing their specialty according to their discriminatory laws, and killed humanitarian workers on multiple charges, including their allegiance to the Syrian regime, cooperating with it, or violating the policy of organization. Since the beginning of 2018, the role of Hay’at Tahrir al Sham has emerged in restricting the humanitarian work in the areas under its control in the north, especially the relief work. This is reflected in imposing that the relief organizations have to deal with the General Directorate for Displaced Affairs of the ‘Government of Salvation’ before starting any project, and paying the fees involved. Hay’at Tahrir al Sham also intervened in several cases, publicizing the location of the distribution of aid and the beneficiary group. We have recorded the arrest of personnel working in the humanitarian field simply because they expressed a view contrary to the policy of Hay’at Tahrir al Sham. In addition, the group has arrested many personnel, including humanitarian workers, after it extended its control over some areas and transferred the administrative control over civil facilities from the Interim Government to the ‘Government of Salvation’. It also failed to neutralize the humanitarian facilities during its internal fighting operations, causing the death of many humanitarian workers, as well as damaging their related facilities. It also followed the policy of the Syrian Regime forces of

³ We contacted him via Skype on February 11, 2018



the siege of some hospitals and storming them in order to arrest an injured person. At the end of 2018 as Hay'at Tahrir al Sham began seizing control over large areas of Idlib governorate, a large number of governments and international organizations stopped providing any material support to these areas; fearing that part of this support may reach organizations that are categorized as terrorists, which had a dreadful effect on the already difficult lives and living conditions of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, who are the first victims in any area controlled by extremist organizations.

The bombing of vital humanitarian centers by the coalition forces (the International Coalition Forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces) is considered a primary challenge for these centers in the areas under the control of ISIS, in addition to the practices of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party) of arresting humanitarian personnel for supposed infringements of their policy.

One of the most difficult challenges faced by vital humanitarian centers in the areas controlled by factions of the Armed Opposition, meanwhile, is the internal fighting between these groups, which have failed to take into account the inviolability of the humanitarian workers and their facilities. These groups have also impeded the work of these centers and injured some of their personnel, sometimes killing them.

Finally, in recent months, the Syrian north has seen an unprecedented breakdown of security, which has clearly had an adverse effect on the humanitarian work process. The number of kidnappings has increased, and humanitarian workers have been the largest category affected by these kidnappings. The kidnappers have demanded often extortionate ransom payments. In some cases, the abductee was killed after being robbed of the ransom sum. The warehouses of several humanitarian organizations have also been looted.

The SNHR met with Mr. Hussein al Mohammad⁴, quartermaster of warehouses for the Sham Charitable Association operating in Idlib, who was kidnapped by unknown gunmen. He told us: **“On Wednesday night, December 26, 2018, on my way back from Termanein village in Idlib to my home in Sarmada city, a car with five armed masked men intercepted me. They took me out of the car I was driving, and put me into the trunk of their car, then took me to an unknown destination. I was blindfolded for the entire time of my kidnapping. After about a week, the kidnappers forced me to appear in videos in which I appealed to my family and friends to speed up the ransom payment. Negotiations continued for 17 days, and after my friends paid the ransom, the kidnappers dumped me, blindfolded and handcuffed, near Idlib city, where, with the help of some passers-by, I was uncuffed, then headed to the city. “**

⁴ We met him on January 12, 2019



Another difficult challenge facing the wholly credible national human rights organizations working in Syria is that the Syrian regime controls most of the relief supplies sent by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; we have received numerous highly credible reports from various sources stating that the Damascus office of the UNOHCHR is run by family members of high-ranking officials in the Syrian regime. The dependence of the UN office in Syria on the Syrian Red Crescent is in itself a legitimate cause for doubting the integrity and trustworthiness of the distribution of relief supplies, since the Syrian Red Crescent is controlled almost completely by regime security departments and family members of pro-regime officials, in the same way as most of the state institutions due to the totalitarian regime's absolute rule.

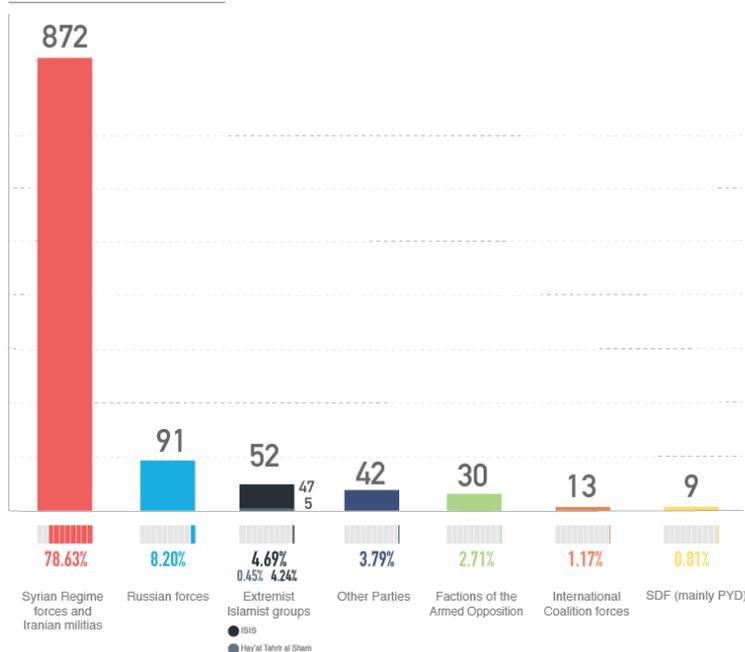
Due to these factors, most of the humanitarian relief supplies from the UN in Syria have been distributed according to the Syrian regime's wishes, and therefore goes to regime areas which are not the worst affected and have no need of these supplies, with coordination with the highly credible national humanitarian organizations kept to a minimum in comparison to the coordination with the Syrian Red Crescent.

III. The Most Notable Violations Against the Humanitarian Sector According to the Database of the Syrian Network for Human Rights

A. Extrajudicial killing:

SNHR documented that 1,109 humanitarian workers have been killed at the hands of the main parties in Syria from March 2011 to March 2019, distributed as follows:

Distributed as follows:



As documented by SNHR



1109
 humanitarian
 workers were killed
 at the hands of
 the main parties to
 the conflict in Syria
 from March 2011 to March 2019

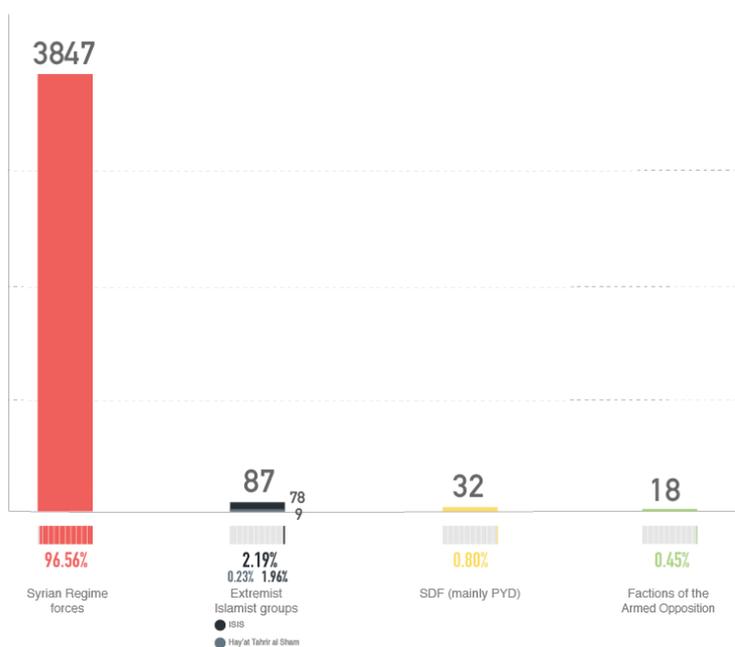


- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 872
- **Russian forces:** 91
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 52, divided between:
 - ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'): 47
 - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition): Five
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 30
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Nine
- **International coalition forces:** 13
- **Other parties:** 42

B. Arrest and enforces disappearance:

SNHR has documented at least 3,984 humanitarian workers as being still detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the main parties in Syria from March 2011 to March 2019, distributed as follows:

Distributed as follows:



As documented by SNHR



At least
3984
 humanitarian workers are still detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria
 from March 2011 to March 2019



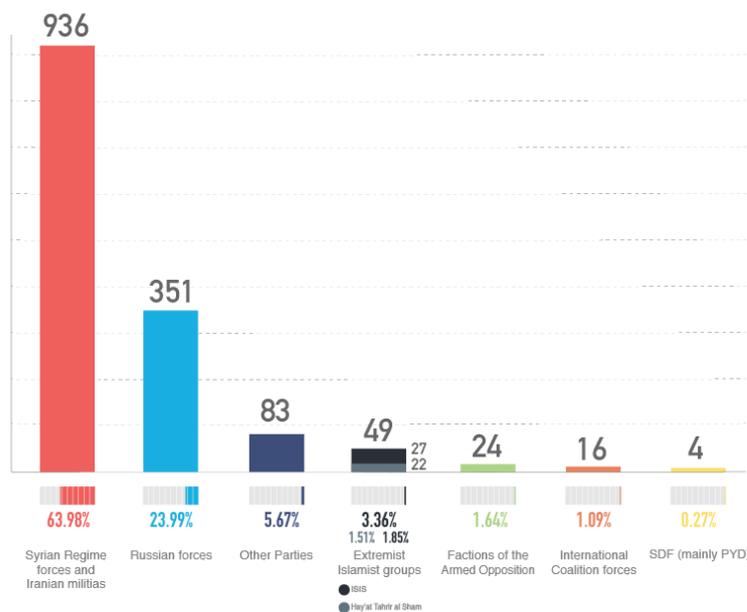
- **Syrian Regime forces:** 3,847
- **Russian forces:** 91
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 87, divided between:
 - o ISIS: 78
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: Nine
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 18
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 32

C. Attacks on vital humanitarian facilities:

SNHR documented at least 1,463 attacks on vital humanitarian facilities at the hands of the main parties in Syria from March 2011 to March 2019, distributed as follows:



Distributed as follows:



As documented by SNHR

At least
1463
attacks on vital humanitarian facilities at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria
from March 2011 to March 2019

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 936
- **Russian forces:** 351
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 49, divided between:
 - o ISIS: 27
 - o Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: 22
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 24
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Four
- **International coalition forces:** 16
- **Other parties:** 83



IV. Examples of Incidents of Grave Violations Against the Humanitarian Sector in Syria

A. The most notable incidents of extrajudicial killing:

[Hisham Subhi Abdul Rahman](#), a doctor, from Banyas city in Tartous governorate, aged 37 at the time of his arrest, was the founder of the Syrian Free Doctors Organization. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Thursday, April 19, 2012, while he was on his way to Damascus city. On Friday, December 19, 2014, his family learnt that he had been executed in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate.

Yasin Qadro, was a doctor from Hasaka city. ISIS stormed his home in al Nashwa neighborhood in Hasaka city on Saturday, June 27, 2015, and shot him dead on charges of being a gynecologist.

[Salah al Din al Tabba'](#), a volunteer in the Syrian Red Crescent Damascus branch, from al Shaghour neighborhood in Damascus city, aged 21 at the time of his arrest, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Friday September 5, 2014, while crossing the Syrian-Lebanese border. On Saturday, July 25, 2015, his family informed us that they had been notified that he had been executed by firing squad inside the General Directorate of Military Intelligence in Kafrsousa neighborhood in Damascus city. The Syrian authorities returned his personal effects to his family without handing over his body.

[Wafaa al Akesh](#), a dermatologist from Latakia city, was killed on Tuesday, November 10, 2015, by a homemade rocket-propelled shell at Spirou station area in Latakia. The source of the shell was artillery located in an area under the control of Ahrar al-Sham Islamic Movement, a faction of the Armed Opposition.

[Hasan Mohammad al A'raj](#), [a cardiologist](#) from Kafr Zita city in Hama Governorate, born in 1970, was married with children. He was the director of the American-Syrian Medical Complex and director of the Hama Free Health Directorate and Kafr Zita Specialist Hospital. He was killed on Wednesday, April 13, 2016, as a result of a missile fired at his car by fixed-wing warplanes that we believe were Russian, whilst the vehicle was in front of the Central Cave Hospital near Kafr Zita city.

Layla Batool, known as Fedaa al Halabi, a humanitarian relief activist from Aleppo city, was a second-year student at the Faculty of Sharia at the University of Aleppo. Laila, a single woman born in 1995, worked in the field of social, education and social protection guidance with the Space of Hope Relief Foundation. On Tuesday, November 29, 2016, she was killed in artillery shelling by Syrian Regime forces of al Zebdiyeh neighborhood in Aleppo city.



Five members of the Civil Defense rescue group ('White Helmets') in Aleppo governorate, named as Ali Hussein al Ahmad, Ragheb Mohammad Khair al Bakr, Zakariya Shaban al Saeed, Mohammad Mahmoud al Mustafa, and Ahmad Abdul Jawad al Eissa, were shot dead on Saturday, May 26, 2018, by unknown gunmen who attacked the Civil Defense's al Hader center in Tal Hadiya village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate where they worked. We have been unable to determine the party responsible for their murder up to the time of preparing this report.

[Ali](#), from [Homs city](#), aged 30 years.

[Ragheb](#), from Kosniya village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, aged 36 years.

[Zakariya](#), from Aleppo city, [aged 29 years](#).

[Mohammad](#), from [al Zeyara town](#) in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, aged 32 years.

[Ahmad](#), from Um al Karamil village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, aged 37 years.



Abdul Mu'ti al Obayd⁵, the director of the Civil Defense's Barda Center, told the SNHR that he was at home, about 20 km from the scene of the incident: **“At around 02:00, I learned from the Civil Defense Observatory that al Hader center was attacked by unknown gunmen who opened fire at the night shift group. I headed towards the center immediately and arrived at the site approximately 45 minutes later. I saw four of our members dead and four others were injured, whom we assisted. One of them died a few hours later”** He added that the contents of the center, including the vehicles and the walkies were stolen, along with the phones of the murdered and injured members and their motorcycles.

⁵ We contacted him via WhatsApp on June 5, 2018



Muammar Bakkour, a relief activist, from Batabo village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1988, was married with two children. He was working for the Emissa Humanitarian Organization when he was killed on Wednesday, May, 30, 2018, as a result of Syrian Regime forces firing a shoulder-launched missile near a car he was in on the road between the villages of al Zeyara and al Enkawi in Sahl al Ghab area in the western suburbs of Hama governorate.

[Hamdou Abdul Kader al Omar](#), an administrator of the “People in Need” Organization, from al Habeit village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1976. He was abducted by armed elements on Monday, December 10, 2018, near Sarmada city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. Despite his family paying a ransom to his kidnappers to secure his safe release, his [body](#) was found with several gunshot wounds on Saturday, January 5, 2019, near Haj Mohammad farm east of al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. We have unable to identify the party responsible for his abduction and murder up to the time of preparing this report. The area was under the control Hay’at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

B. The most notable incidents of arrest and enforced disappearance:

[Sultan Jamal Sultan](#), born in 1989, was a dentistry graduate and a trainer and paramedic with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, from al Qaryatein city in the northeast of Homs governorate. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Friday, September 23, 2011, while he was passing through one of their checkpoints in al Fakhoura neighborhood in Homs city. He was last seen in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate in November 2013. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR, as well as to his family.



[Mahmoud Khalil Khebiya](#) and Imad Numan al Hajja, two volunteer paramedics with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, were arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Sunday, December 2, 2012, while they were on an official mission in Adra al Ummaliya area east of Damascus Suburbs governorate. Their fate remains unknown to the SNHR, as well as to their families. Mahmoud, from Douma city in the east of Damascus Suburbs governorate, was born in 1988.

[Imad](#), from Douma city in the east of Damascus Suburbs governorate, was born in 1990.



[Abdul Jabbar Khallouf al Staif](#), a pharmacist and medical activist, from Hama city, born in 1981, suffers from several chronic diseases. He was first arrested in April 2013 by Syrian Regime forces who took him to a detention center at Hama Military Airport, before releasing him about 10 days later. He was subsequently rearrested a few weeks later by armed elements of the Air Security Forces in Hama city on Monday, July 1, 2013, following a raid on his pharmacy in Hama city. He was taken to an undisclosed location and has been under enforced disappearance since then.

The SNHR contacted a relative of Abdul Jabbar ⁶, who told us: **“The security elements set a trap for Abdul Jabbar, when they entered his pharmacy in civilian clothes and told him that they had an injured person who needed assistance. He allowed them to bring him. When they entered, they shoved guns into his face and started threatening him. He offered them money for his release, but they took him to his house, searched it, and stool all the money they found, then they took Abdul Jabbar with them before the eyes of his wife and children. “**

Ali al Jad’e, a former volunteer with the Syrian Civil Defense, from al Dmina village in the southern suburbs of Hama governorate, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Thursday, October 4, 2018, in Tloul al Humr village in the southern Suburbs of Hama governorate. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR, as well as to his family.

[Abdo Hussein Najjar](#), a cardiologist, from Ma’aret al Na’san village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, works at al UOSSM Organization in Deir Hassan village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was abducted by armed elements affiliated with Hay’at Tahrir al Sham on Sunday, December 2, 2018, while he was on his to work on the road between the villages of Ma’aret al Na’san village and Deir Hassan. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR, as well as to his family.

[Dr. Adnan Bostan Kurdi](#), a physiotherapist born in 1955, came from Blaliko village of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Wednesday, January 16, 2019, he was kidnapped in an ambush by unidentified unarmed elements, who lured him under false pretenses, supposedly to treat a seriously injured person outside the clinic’s headquarters in Villas Street in Afrin city, before kidnapping him. They then contacted his family and demanded a ransom of 10,000 US dollars for his release.

⁶ We contacted the relative, who wishes for their identity to remain anonymous via WhatsApp on March 6, 2018.



Dr. Adnan's family presented the footage from the clinic's surveillance cameras to the military police in Afrin city, and we learned from members of his family that some of the kidnappers are affiliated with al Majd faction, and others with Failaq al Sham, both of which are factions of the Armed Opposition. The kidnappers were followed and arrested by the military police, before Adnan was freed on Tuesday, January 22, 2019, [with marks of severe torture on his body](#).

[Fawaz Hussein al Ali](#), a doctor, from Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqqa governorate, was arrested by Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party) on Saturday, February 23, 2019, following a raid on his home in Tal Abyad city. His fate remains unknown to the SNHR, as well as to his family.

C. The most notable attacks on humanitarian facilities:

On Saturday, August 23, 2014, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a number of [missiles](#) at the [National Hospital](#) in al Tabaqa city south of Raqqqa governorate, inflicting a massacre; among the victims were four of the [medical personnel](#) working in the hospital. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, February 25, 2015, elements of ISIS stormed al Qouriya Field Hospital in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour. They closed it after confiscating all the medical equipment and devices, under the pretext that the medical personnel had relation with the "Awakening and apostates".

On Monday, April 6, 2015, artillery forces stationed in an area controlled by factions of the Armed Opposition fired a rocket shell that landed near the supervisory health center in al Salamia city east of Hama governorate. The shelling resulted in the deaths of seven civilians, including two children, and injured 18 others, in addition to inflicting material damage to the center. The city was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, February 15, 2016, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched [four air strikes](#) using [missiles](#) on a building being used by [Médecins Sans Frontiers \(MSF\)](#) as a [field hospital](#) in al Hamidiya village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, inflicting [a massacre](#); among the victims were nine of the field hospital's medical personnel, including Dr. Emad al Din Mohammad al Nesr. The attack also completely destroyed the four-floor hospital building. The village was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.





Destruction inflicted by a Russian air strike at a field hospital in al Hamidiya village, Idlib – February 15, 2016

On Monday, September 19, 2016, Syrian Regime helicopters, along with fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were most probably Russian, participated in a series of intensive attacks on a Red Crescent medical Centre to the east of Urm al Kubra town in western Aleppo governorate, launching multiple air strikes in an attack that lasted for nearly three hours. The Syrian regime's helicopters dropped at least four barrel bombs, while the Russian warplanes carried out at least nine air raids using missiles and heavy machine guns. The attacks inflicted a massacre of aid workers and bus drivers, in addition to causing extensive destruction of the Red Crescent building, and setting fire to more than 10 trucks loaded with relief aid. We issued [a detailed report](#) on the incident.

On Wednesday, November 16, 2016, at around 14:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired four missiles, three of which targeted the warehouses of the Ataa Relief Foundation located in the north-western neighborhood of Batabo village, while the fourth missile hit a residential building at a distance of approximately 300 m north of the site of the first attack. The attack resulted in a massacre, in addition to causing massive destruction to the residential buildings and warehouses of Ataa Relief Foundation. We issued [a detailed report](#) on the incident.



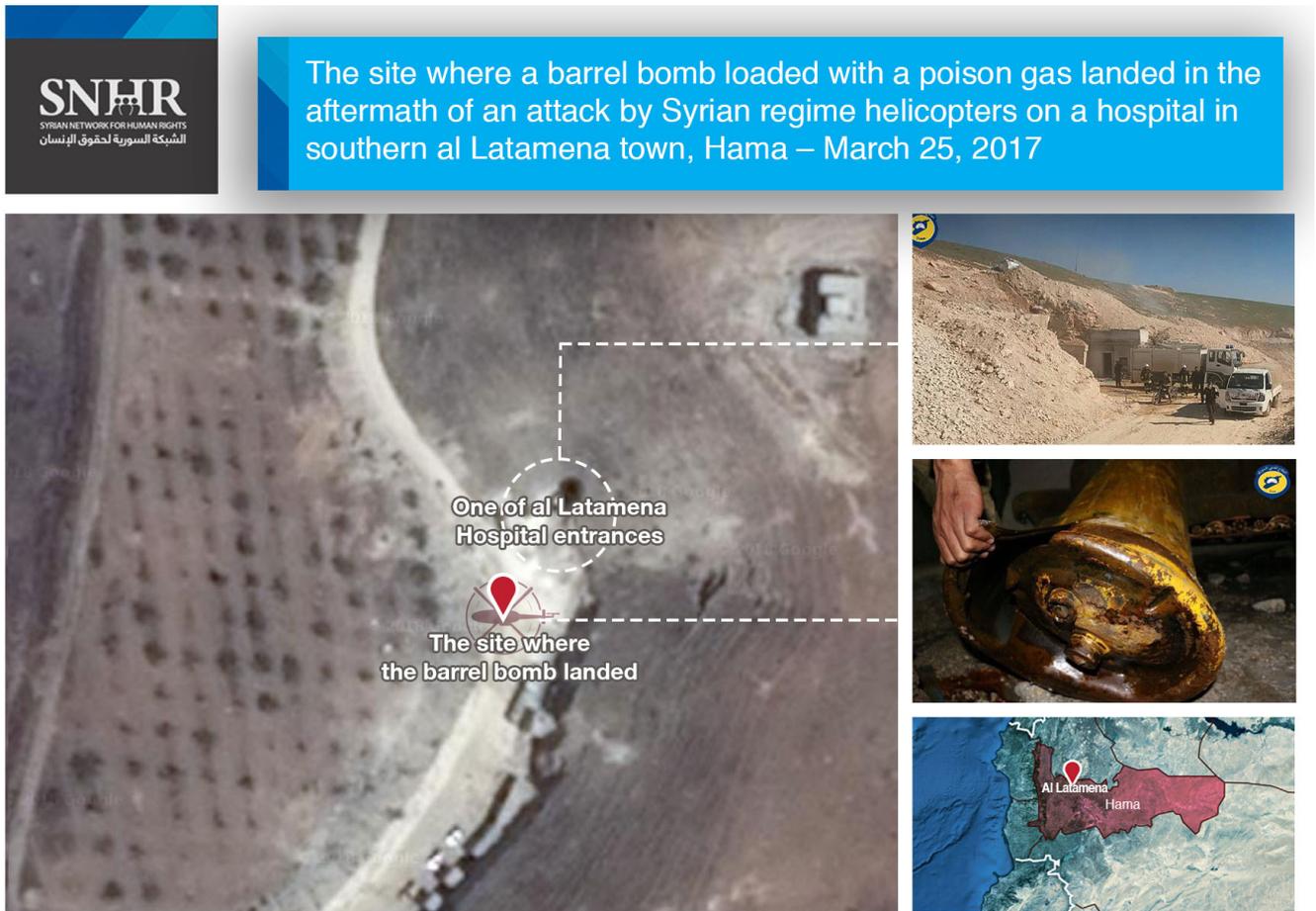
Map showing the approximate locations of the sites where the missiles landed:



On Saturday, March 25, 2017, Syrian regime helicopters dropped [a barrel bomb containing poison gas](#) on [al Latamena Surgical Hospital](#) in al Latamena in the north-western suburbs of Hama governorate, resulting in the deaths of two individuals from suffocation; one of the victims was an [orthopedic surgeon, Ali Ahmad Darwish](#). The attack also left a hole in the roof of the entrance to the hospital, and caused significant material damage to the hospital building and equipment, putting the hospital out of service. The town was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.



Map showing the location of al Latamena hospital and the site where a barrel bomb containing poison gases landed:



The SNHR contacted one of the medical personnel who was among the first to arrive at the site of the attack, a nurse named Abdullah , who helped to transfer of the injured to Kafr Zita Hospital: “When we arrived, the barrel bomb has been dropped at the door of the hospital and the gas leaked from it into the hospital. We began to assist the medical staff, who showed symptoms of coughing, constipation and convulsions. We worked on transferring them to the hospital, where I stayed with Dr. Ali Darwish. I undressed him and helped him to get a shower, then provided him with spray and oxygen sessions, and provided him with assistance with the materials available to us, then doctors decided to transfer him to the hospitals to the north. **“ Abdullah added that he accompanied the doctor in the car, and that the deterioration of Dr. Darwish’s condition meant that they had to stop at a hospital on route. “He started to suffer from convulsions. We stopped halfway for an orotracheal procedure in a hospital. In the orotracheal process, his heart stopped due to lack of oxygen. It was almost non-existent, in addition to many foam secretions in his lungs. “**



On Saturday, April 29, 2017, at around 12:00, fixed-wing Syrian-Russian alliance warplanes fired at least two high-explosive missiles targeting the Civil Defense Center 107 north of Kafr Zita city, on the road leading to Tal Aas village, which resulted in the deaths of [eight Civil Defense personnel](#). After the first attack, we recorded a series of consecutive attacks that lasted for at least four hours, during which the Syrian-Russian alliance forces used the air force and ground artillery to target the area around Civil Defense Center 107's base, along with the ambulance teams and civil defense personnel who were carrying out the rescue operations. Between 19:30 and 20:30 on the same day, Civil Defense Center 109 was targeted by fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes, causing damage to the building. The center specializes in the removal of weapons remnants. We issued a detailed report on the incident.

Map showing the location of Civil Defense center 107, and destruction caused by a Syrian-Russian alliance forces' attack:



On Friday, March 2, 2018, fixed-wing International Coalition forces warplanes fired missiles at the field hospital known as [Nabdh al Hayat Hospital](#) in al Sh'afa city of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, which caused the complete destruction of the hospital building, putting it out of service. The village was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The deliberate attacks against medical units, medical personnel, clearly identified individuals and facilities marked by emblems protected by the Geneva Convention, and those working in the humanitarian field or with peacekeeping groups, are war crimes, and it is part of the International Criminal Court's duties to hold the perpetrators accountable, according to Article 8 of the court's charter, as well as constituting a breach of the rules 31, 32, 45, 55, 56 of the International Customary Humanitarian Law.
- Incidents included in this report are unquestionably examples of breaches of UN Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2254 calling for the end of arbitrary attacks, and breaches of Article 7 and Article 8 of the Rome Statute, all of which constitute war crimes.
- The attacks including in this report are a breach of UN Security Council resolution 2286 calling for an end of violations and transgressions committed in armed conflicts against workers in the medical field as well as in humanitarian relief, who are specifically performing medical tasks, and against their transportation vehicles as well as their equipment, hospitals, and other medical facilities.
- We confirm that most of the attacks included in the report targeted unarmed civilians, and therefore, the perpetrators have violated International Human Rights Law, which protects the right to life. In addition, these crimes were committed in a non-international armed conflict, meaning that these attacks constitute war crimes, as they fulfill all the criteria for this categorization.
- The attacks included in the report are considered a violation of International Customary Humanitarian Law, as the shells were fired at facilities and vehicles used for humanitarian purposes and the shells did not target a specific military object.
- The bombings have caused losses of civilian lives, injuries, and severe damage to civilian facilities, and there are strong indications that lead us to believe the damage was disproportionately extreme compared to any military objectives for the attacks.



Recommendations:

To the UN Security Council:

- The Security Council must reevaluate the level of risk of violations of human rights and its threat levels to international and regional peace and security, and revert to Article Seven to protect humanitarian workers and facilities in Syria.
- The Security Council must take extra steps after issuing resolutions 2139 and 2254, as there appears to be no commitment to stopping the arbitrary bombing, and all parties must be made to comply with this, in addition to complying with the International Customary Law.
- The Syrian crisis should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those responsible for related crimes should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been repeatedly proven.
- The current sanctions should be expanded to include the Syrian, Iranian, and Russian regimes as all are directly involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian People.
- The militias fighting alongside the Syrian government, which are responsible for committing mass slaughter and multiple crimes against humanity, such as the Iranian militias, the Lebanese Hezbollah, other Shiite militias, National Defense army, and Shabiha, should be placed on the international terrorists list.
- The Syrian government should no longer be classified as a legitimate official party in regard to any relief efforts, given its responsibility for multiple crimes against humanity, and should no longer be supplied with large amounts of financial or any other relief, which mostly fails to reach those who desperately need and deserve this aid, instead being distributed to Syrian government supporters who have no need of it.

To the 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 through protecting them from daily killing and lifting the sieges imposed on them, as well as 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 involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels, from the Arab League's plan to Mr. Kofi Annan's plan, 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 actively obstructing 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 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.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

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

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report and previous reports, and the SNHR is fully ready to cooperate and to work on supplying more evidence and details.

The European Union and United States of America

- Support the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) established in accordance with the UN General Assembly Resolution 248/71 issued on December 21, 2016, and open local state courts that operate according to the principle of international justice in order to pursue justice for the victims of war crimes perpetrated in Syria.

The Syrian regime

- Stop treating the Syrian state as a personal family possession.
- End the terrorizing of the Syrian community through killing workers in the medical, rescue, and relief fields.
- Stop the bombing of hospitals and care and relief facilities, as well as civilian areas, and respect Customary Humanitarian Law.
- Accept full accountability for the legal and financial costs of its actions, and compensate the victims and their families via the state's assets.



The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.

The Coalition (international coalition forces 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 to deny responsibility, 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.
- All forms of support, military and all others, should end until the SDF commits itself to complying with the previous recommendations. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that these can be used in perpetrating war crimes or crimes against humanity can be seen as a direct contribution to these crimes.

Armed Opposition factions

- Armed Opposition factions must ensure the protection of humanitarian workers and facilities in all areas under their control, and launch investigations into the attacks mentioned in the report.



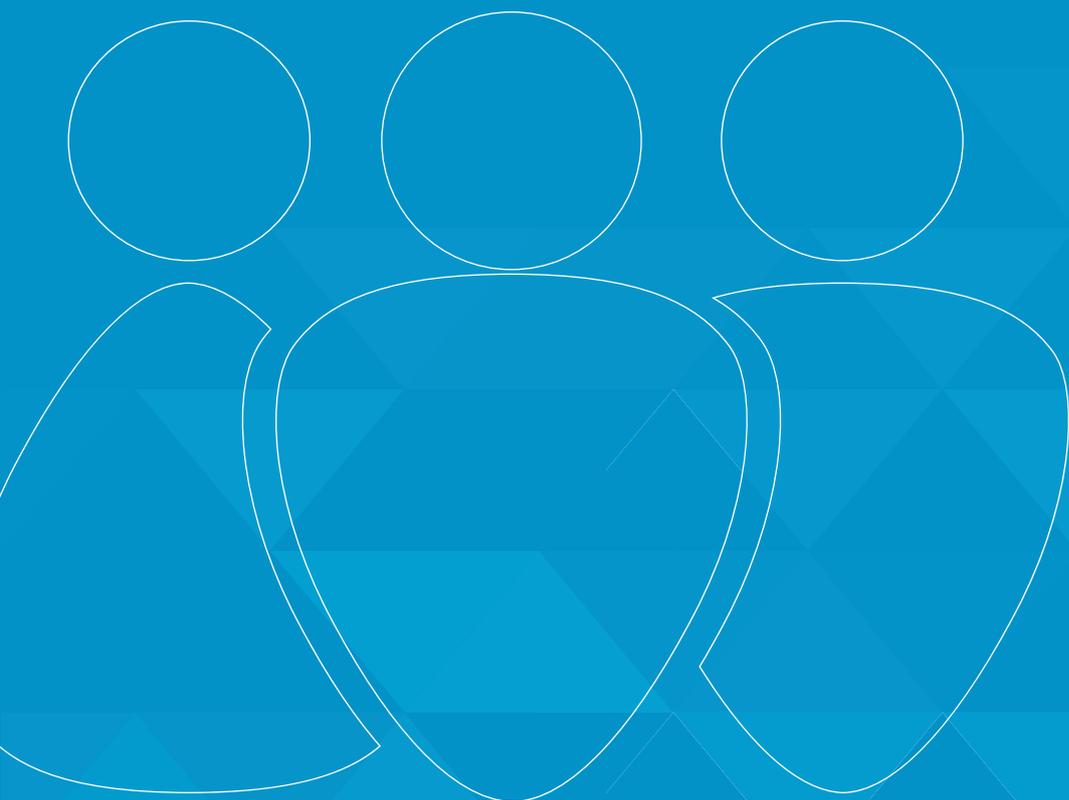
Humanitarian organizations:

- Humanitarian organizations working in Syria must make no distinction between help and protection, and must report all violations they suffer during their work.
- The humanitarian organizations working in Syria should unequivocally condemn and denounce all the attacks mentioned in this report and any similar future violations in an effort to ensure that such violations are not repeated.
- Given the intense need for all kinds of humanitarian support in Syria, particularly in light of the increasing numbers of IDPs who are struggling financially; the support operations that are needed for the humanitarian facilities, such as hospitals shouldn't stop, and these facilities should be able to continue delivering relief. International organizations must also send volunteers to the non-dangerous areas to help medical staff to treat the wounded and ill being brought to them.

Acknowledgments

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