

Six Media Activists Killed, Five Injured, Two Abducted and Arrested, Toll of March 2017

Including Three Killed
by the Syrian-Russian Alliance



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Saturday, April 8, 2017

Report Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Methodology
- III. Executive Summary
- IV. Details
- V. Recommendations

I. Introduction

Media activism in Syria is continuously deteriorating in light of the lack of attention by many international media organizations to what is happening in Syria and the notable decline in media coverage over the last year compared with previous years.

SNHR publishes a monthly report documenting the violations against media activists who play a prominent role in the civil movement and the armed conflict.

It should be noted that a journalist is a civilian according to the international humanitarian law regardless of his nationality. Any attack deliberately directed against a journalist is considered a war crime. However, when a media activist gets close to action-heavy zones, he is responsible for his own actions where targeting him in such case would be seen as collateral damage. Also, he would lose the right to protection if he was involved in military operations. We believe that media activists must be respected whether they have identification papers as media workers or don't considering the many difficulties they encounter to acquire these papers.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

"Media activism is especially important because it often sheds light on a string of various crimes that are taking place on a daily basis. Therefore, we record the violations perpetrated by conflicting parties in our monthly reports on violations against media activists."



SNHR emphasizes that serious and quick steps must be taken to save media activism in Syria, and renews its condemnation of all violations against the freedom of media activism regardless of the perpetrators. The freedom of media must be respected and the workers in the media field must be protected and particularly considered. All individuals involved in violations against journalists and media activists must be held accountable. The international community, represented by the Security Council, must act upon its responsibilities in order to protect civilians and media activists in Syria.

II. Methodology

According to SNHR's methodology, a civilian journalist is anyone who plays a notable role in reporting and publishing news. He is not necessarily impartial as a journalist should be.

In case a civilian journalist carried a weapon and was directly engaged in offensive military operations, he is no longer deemed a citizen journalist whereas it is possible that he would be referred to as a civilian journalist again provided he retires completely from military action.

The report might include incidents that we believe do not constitute violations of the international humanitarian law. We include it, however, to record it among the incidents that resulted in casualties even though it was within the boundaries that the international humanitarian law allows for.

This report draws upon SNHR's archive and the investigations conducted by the Network in addition to accounts by victims' families, information from local activists, and analyzing the pictures and videos that we have been receiving and archiving in our records since 2011. to read more about SNHR [methodology](#) in documenting victims.

In light of the security and logistic difficulties to access all the areas where violations take place, it is worth noting that these statistics and incidents are only the bare minimum of the actual magnitude of crimes and violations that happened.



III. Executive Summary

Violations against media activists during the month of March 2017 are distributed as follows:

A. Acts of killing: SNHR documented the killing of six media activists as follows:

- Syrian regime forces (Army, security forces, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): two media activists
- Russian forces: one media activist
- Extremist Islamic groups:
 - ISIS (Self-proclaimed the Islamic State): two media activists
- Other parties: one media activist

B. Injuries: we recorded five injuries as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: one media activist
- Russian forces: three media activists
- Armed opposition factions: one media activist

C. Arrest, abduction and release: we recorded five cases as follows:

- Extremist Islamic groups
 - Fateh Al Sham Front (Formerly al Nussra Front): we recorded one release case.
- Self-management forces (Primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): we recorded one case of arrest, where the detained media activist was released later.
- Other parties: We recorded one abduction case, where the abducted media activist was released later.

IV. Details

A. Violations by Syrian regime forces (Army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)

- Acts of killing

Sunday, March 12, 2017, media activist [Mohammad Qasem Abazid](#) was killed after a fatal injury to the head sustained in a bombing by the fixed-wing warplanes of the Syrian-Russian alliance (Investigations are still ongoing to determine the perpetrator party) that fired a missile near him, as he was covering clashes between Syrian regime forces and armed opposition factions on the battlefield of [al Bahhar neighborhood](#) in Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city, which was part of the battle "Al Maut Wala al Mathala".



Mohammad, known as George Samara, a reporter and photographer for Nabd Syria TV channel and the Syrian Media Commission, from Daraa al Balad area, born in 1975, a student at the faculty of media in Damascus University/open learning, married.

Tuesday, March 28, 2017, media activist [Mahmoud Taufiq Naqouh](#) was killed in a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes that fired a missile behind him, as he was covering clashes between Syrian regime forces and armed opposition factions on the battlefield of Hasmin valley in the western suburbs of Hama governorate. Mahmoud, known as Mahmoud al Ghabi, a photographer for al Ferqa al Wousta, an armed opposition faction, from Taman'at al Ghab village in the suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1992, has an intermediate education certificate, married.



SNHR contacted the media activist Mayada al Omar, a colleague of Mahmoud's, via Facebook who told us the following:

"While Mahmoud was covering the clashes between the regime forces and the rebels on the battlefield of Hasmin valley, Syrian regime warplanes carried out an airstrike in the area. Some of the shrapnel, which hit Mahmoud's back, killed him on the spot."

- Injuries

Thursday, March 9, 2017, media activist [Mahmoud Yousef al Swied](#) sustained a fracture in his left shoulder and bruises in most of his body after fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a missile in the vicinity of his house in Kafr Nobbol city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Mahmoud, a host and a program conductor for Fresh Radio, from [Kafr Nobbol](#) city, born in 1973, has a high school diploma, married and a father of three.

SNHR contacted Mahmoud, via Facebook, who told us the following:

"Around 8:15 AM, the Syrian warplanes carried out an airstrike in the city while I was at home. One of the missile fell near my house. The strong explosions caused some of the house walls to fall on me. I sustained some bruises and my left shoulder was broken. I was rushed to Orient Hospital."



B. Violations by Russian forces

- Acts of killing

Wednesday, March 22, 2017, media activist Abdul Hadi Emad Bakdash was killed by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian that fired a missile at his house in al Taybat village, which follows Jesr al Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Abdul Hadi, works at the media office of Ahrar al Sham Movement, an armed opposition faction, from Mazzin village in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, born in 1991, a university student at the faculty of economics/business management department in Tishreen University, single.

SNHR contacted the media activist Fadi Ahmad, a friend of Abdul Hadi's, via Facebook, who told us the following:

“Russian warplanes carried out an airstrike in the village. One of the missile hit Abdul Hadi's house while he was inside. His body has become scattered body parts, as we couldn't find anything but his foot and a piece of his face near the house. His family recognized him by some distinctive signs.”



Abdul Hadi Bakdash

- Injuries

Sunday, March 5, 2017, media activist Ahmad [Nazih al Bayoush](#) was injured in most of his body by shrapnel from a missile loaded with cluster submunitions that was fired by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian near him, as he was tending to the wounded from a previous bombing that targeted Kafr Nobbol city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Ahmad, an editor and host for Fresh Radio, from Kafr Nobbol city, born in 1993, a first-year student at the faculty of architecture in Ebla University.



Ahmad al Bayoush



SNHR contacted the media activist Ahmad, via Facebook, who told us the following:

“On Sunday, March 5, Russian warplanes bombed Kafr Nabbol city. I was tending to the wounded when the same warplanes bombed the area again. I sustained several wounds, the most serious of which was the when in my right knee which required a surgery.”

Sunday, March 5, 2017, media activist Jamil Saad al Hasan was injured by a shrapnel in his right foot and bruises in most of his body after fixed-wing warplanes fired a missile loaded with cluster submunitions in Kafr Nabbol city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, as he was covering a previous bombing.

Jamil, a reporter for Fresh Radio, from Kafr Nabbol city, born in 1992, a third-year university student at the faculty of agricultural engineering, single.



Jamil al Hasan

SNHR contacted the media activist Jamil, via Facebook, who told us the following:

“Around 3:30 AM, while I was covering the developments of the Russian bombing in the city, the warplanes bombed the city again, but this time with cluster missiles. A missile fell in the area, and the shrapnel injured my right ankle, and I also sustained various bruises in my body.”

Sunday, March 5, 2017, media activist Alaa Khaled al Swied was injured by shrapnel in his right foot, and sustained bruises in most of his body, after cluster munitions were dropped by fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian near him, as he was covering a previous bombing by the same warplanes in Kafr Nabbol city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The city is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front.

Alaa, a reporter for Fresh Radio, from Kafr Nabbol city, born in 1993, a first-year student at the faculty of financial and banking sciences, married.



Alaa al Swied



SNHR contacted the media activist Alaa al Swied, via Facebook, who told us the following:

“On Sunday, March 5, around 3:30 AM, Russian warplanes carried out an airstrike in the city. I rushed to cover the aftermath of the bombing and help the wounded. However, the same warplanes returned and fired cluster missiles this time. Shrapnel and rocks scattered everywhere, and I sustained bruises in most of my body, in addition to a slight wound in my right knee.”

C. Violations by extremist Islamic groups

*** ISIS**

- Acts of killing

Wednesday, March 15, 2017, media activist [Ali Suliman](#) was killed by a landmine implanted by ISIS, as he was covering the clashes between Syrian regime forces and ISIS on the battlefield of al Babiri village, which follows Maskana city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Ali, a photographer for al Ekhbariya al Surriya TV channel.

Monday, March 20, 2017, media activist [Mahmoud Iwyda al Jbawi](#) died due to a fatal injury to his right foot after he was shot by ISIS, as he was covering the clashes between armed opposition factions and ISIS as part of the battle “Dahr al Boghat” on the battlefield of Jlein village in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate.

Mahmoud, known as Habbous, a reporter for Tajamou’ Ahrar Houran Media Institution, and a photographer for Jaish al Thawra, an armed opposition faction, from Tafas city in the suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1996, has an intermediate education certificate, single.



Mahmoud al Jbawi

SNHR contacted the media activist Abu Mahmoud al Hourani, a colleague of Mahmoud's, via Facebook, and he told us the following:

“On Monday, March 20, an ISIS fighter shot Mahmoud as he was covering clashes between the rebels and ISIS in “Dahr al Boghat” battle. The bullet hit the vein in his right thigh, and he died immediately.”

*** Fateh al Sham Front (Formerly al Nusra Front)**

- Release

Wednesday, March 8, 2017, Fateh al Sham Front released the media activist [Mohammad Sbeih](#). It should be noted that the group arrested him on Thursday, February 23, 2017, from his place of residence in Kafr Sajna village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

Mohammad, a reporter for Madar al Yaoum Website, from Kafr Sajna village, born in 1982.



D. Violation by armed opposition factions

- Injuries

Wednesday, March 22, 2017, media activist [Maher Shams](#) al Din was [injured](#) in the chest after he was shot by an [armed opposition](#) sniper, as he was covering the clashes between Syrian regime forces and armed opposition factions on the battlefield of Joubar neighborhood in Damascus city.

Maher, a photographer for the Syrian News Agency SANA.

E. Violations by the Self-management forces (Consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

- Arrest and release

Saturday, March 11, 2017, Self-management forces arrested the media activist Bauar Mulla Ahmad from the central market in al Qamishli city in the northern suburbs of al Hasaka governorate. He was released on the same day. Bauar, a reporter for Yekiti Media Website, from al Qamishli city.



Bauar Mulla Ahmad

E. Other parties

- Acts of killing

Thursday, March 30, 2017, local residents found the dead body of the media activist [Mohammad Ali al Bakkour](#) on Idlib-Ariha road, with signs of being shot in the head. It should be noted that unknowns abducted Mohammad from Idlib city, which is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front on Wednesday, March 29, 2017. As of this writing, we haven't been able to identify the group behind the abduction and the killing. Mohammad, [a photographer](#) for al Ma'ra Media Center, from Idlib city, born in 1997, has a high school diploma, single.



Mohammad al Bakkour

SNHR contacted Mohammad al Daher, a friend of Mohammad's, via Facebook, who told us the following:

"On Wednesday, March 29, unknowns abducted Mohammad from Idlib city. On the next day, his dead body was found with two shots in his head. The forensic doctor that examined the body confirmed that the bullets were fired from a gun."



- Abduction and Release

Saturday, March 4, 2017, media activist Juan Shehab was abducted by unknowns from one of the restaurants in Amouda city who took him to an undisclosed location. He was released on Monday, March 13, 2017. As of this writing, SNHR hasn't been able to identify the group behind the abduction.

Juan, a photographer and video producer, from Amouda city in the northern suburbs of al Hasaka governorate, works for Jin Radio and ARTA radio.



V. Recommendations

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Condemn the targeting of media activists in Syria and sheds light on their sacrifice and suffering.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Conduct investigations that focuses on the targeting of media activists given their vital role in recording incidents in Syria.

The Security Council

Work on fighting the policy of impunity by referring the cases in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

International and Arabic media institutions

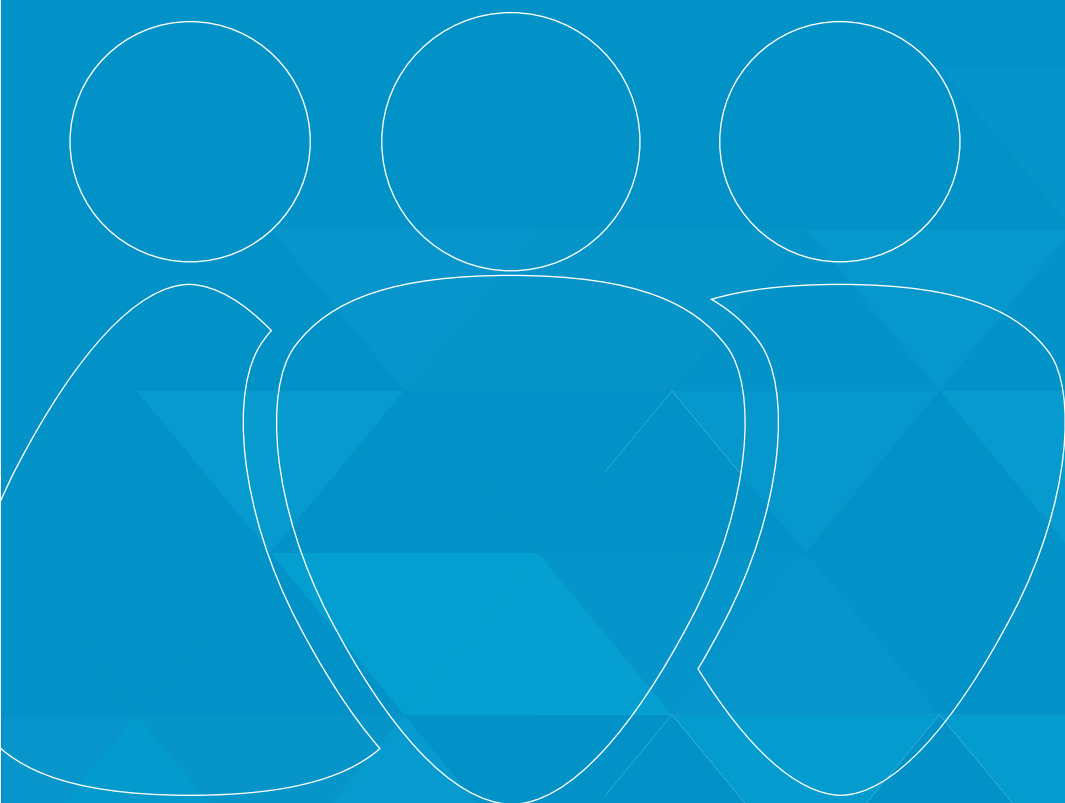
Advocate their colleagues in the field of media by publishing periodic reports that shed light on their daily suffering and memorialize their sacrifice. Also, they must contact their families to console them.

Finally, all parties have to respect the international humanitarian law with respect to the protection of civilians and especially media activists and their equipment.

Acknowledgment

Out most heartfelt condolences go out for the victims' families and our thank for the families and friends of media activists who contributed effectively to this report.





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