

Two Media Workers Killed, One Injured, and Two Arrested in Syria, Toll of August 2018

22 Media Workers Have been
Killed in 2018

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

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

Parties to the conflict have oppressed journalists and citizen journalists to varying extents, committing crimes qualifying as war crimes against them. The Syrian regime, however, is the party who has perpetrated most of these crimes since March 2011, where the Syrian regime has been responsible for up to 83% as it waged a systematic war on media workers, committing hundreds of violations against journalists and citizen journalists, including killing, arrest, and torture in an attempt to conceal the human rights violations that the Syrian people are being subjected to and hide the crimes against Syrian citizens.

On the other hand, ISIS, factions from the armed opposition and Self-Management forces resorted to suppressing views as a policy in their areas of control as seen by the wide arrests they made.

In light of all of that, Syria has fallen to the 177th place (out of 180 countries) according to the Reporters Without Borders' [Press Freedom Index for 2018](#)

A journalist is a civilian individual according to the international humanitarian law regardless of their nationality. Any attack deliberately directed against a journalist is considered a war crime. However, when a media worker gets close to action-heavy zones, they are responsible for their own actions where targeting them in such case would be seen as collateral damage. Also, they would lose the right to protection if they were involved in hostilities.



The international humanitarian law states that journalists should be protected, as Article 79 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 says that civilian journalists who are engaged in missions in areas of armed conflict should be respected, considered as civilians, and protected from all forms of deliberate attacks, provided that they take to action adversely affecting their status as civilians. Additionally, Rule 34 of the international humanitarian law's customary rules states that:” **Civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities.**”

In addition, Security Council adopted [Resolution 2222](#) on May 27, 2015, which condemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict,

Methodology

This report monitors the most notable violations against media workers (journalists and citizen journalists) in August by the parties to the conflict.

SNHR defines a citizen journalist as anyone who plays a significant role in reporting and publishing news. He is not necessarily impartial as a journalist should be. In case a citizen journalist bore arms and was directly engaged in hostilities, he would be no longer deemed a citizen journalist whereas it is possible that he would be referred to as a citizen journalist again, provided he retires completely from military action.

This report draws upon, firstly, the daily, ongoing documentation and monitoring efforts by SNHR team, and, secondly, on accounts from survivors, eyewitnesses, and local media workers that we've talked to via phone or social media. We have also analyzed a large number of the videos and pictures that were posted online or we received from local activists via e-mail, Skype, and social media. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report in a secret online database, as well as backup copies on hard drives. We always make sure to store this data with its respective source. Nonetheless, we can't claim that we have documented all cases, in light of the ban and pursuit by Syrian regime forces and some of the other armed groups.

Please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [documenting victims](#).



This report contains two accounts that we've collected through speaking directly to eyewitnesses, and are not cited from any open sources. We have explained the purpose of these interviews for the eyewitnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided without offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR tried to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible, and gave insurances to conceal the identity of any witness who preferred to use an alias.

The report might include incidents that we believe do not constitute violations of the international humanitarian law. We include it, however, to preserve the truth historically and store it as a national record, but we don't describe it as having qualified as crimes.

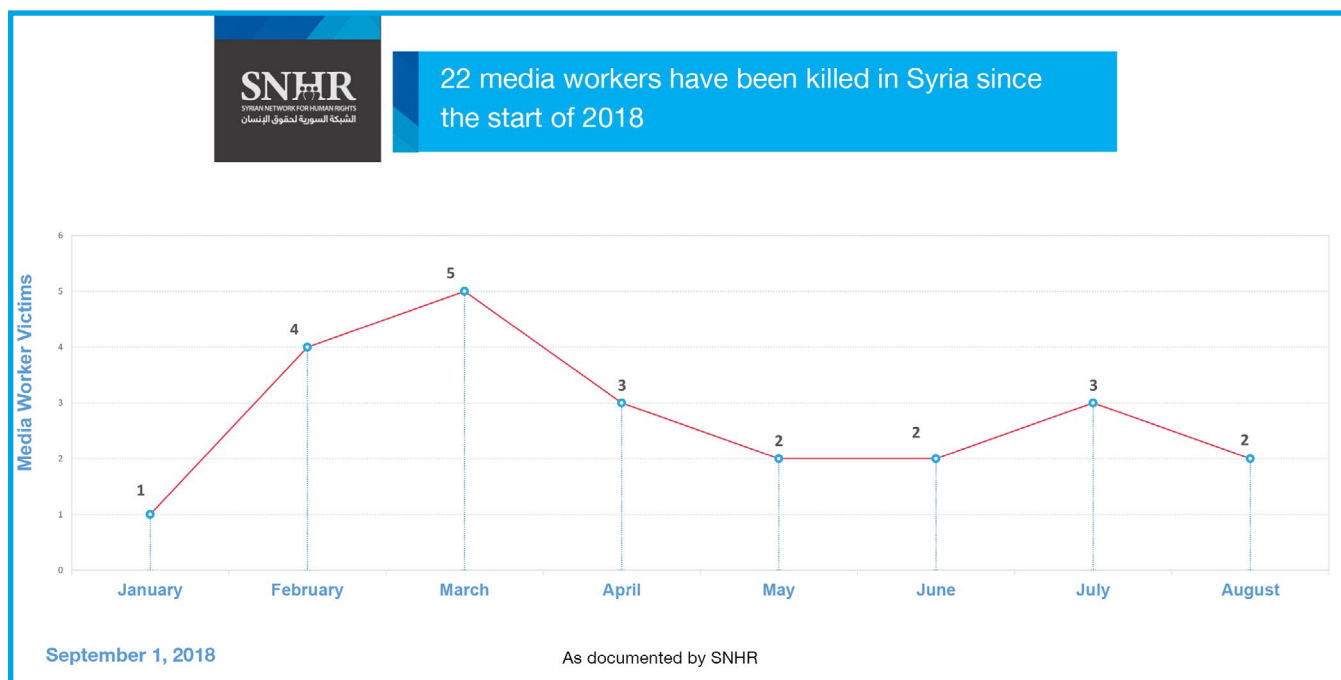
II. August Outline

As the scope of military operations diminished throughout Syria in August compared to the months before, numbers of civilian deaths have dropped. On the other hand, August was the third month in which new names of dead forcibly-disappeared came into light as family are still finding out that their relatives have been registered as dead by civil registration offices (al Nofous). Among the cases we documented in August were one media worker. We also documented the killing of another in a military operation.

III. Executive Summary

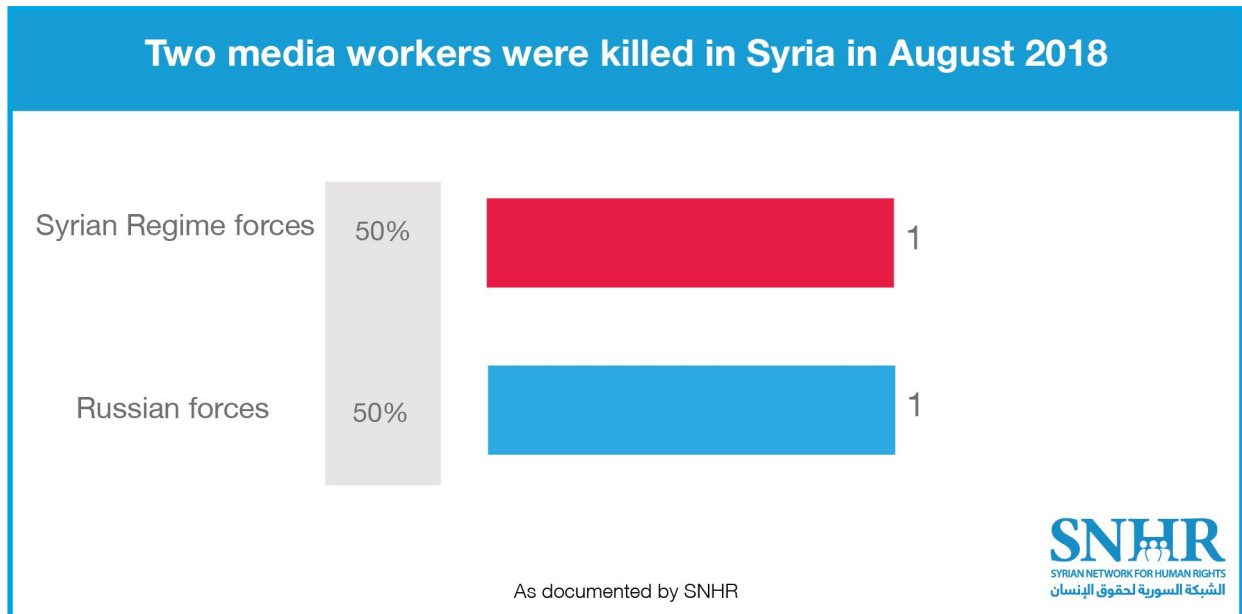
A. Death toll among media workers since the start of 2018

SNHR has documented that 22 media workers were killed between the start of 2018 and September of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria. Death toll is distributed by month as follows:



B. Violations against media workers in August 2018

Violations against media workers in August 2018 were distributed as follows:



- **Acts of killing:** SNHR has documented the killing of two media workers, as follows:
 - Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 1 due to torture
 - Russian forces: 1
- **Injuries:** we have recorded that 1 media worker was injured by Syrian regime forces
- **Arrest and release:** We've recorded 3 cases, as follows:
 - Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): we've recorded one case of arrest
 - Extremist Islamic groups
 - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of armed opposition faction): we've recorded one case of arrest where the detained media worker was released later.



IV. Details

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)

- Acts of killing

Mohammad Nour Mohammad al Shamali

Wednesday, August 1, 2018, we received information that Mohammad was registered as dead in civil records. We suspect that he died due to torture inside a Syrian regime detention center. It should be noted that Syrian regime forces arrested him in front of Aleppo University on Saturday, December 1, 2012.

Mohammad Nour, media worker, from Aleppo city

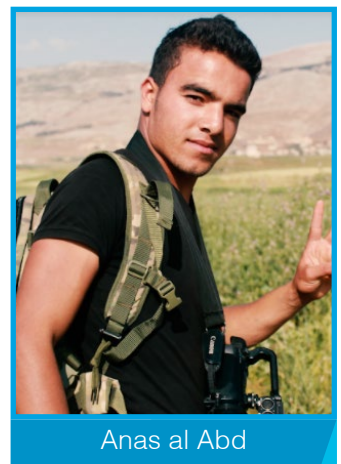


- Injuries

Anas al Abd “real name was concealed for security concerns”

Friday, August 3, 2018, [Anas was injured](#) by shrapnel in his left shoulder where a shell fired by Syrian regime forces artillery, which were stationed in Jourin Camp, western suburbs of Hama governorate, landed near him in Zezoun village, western suburbs of Hama governorate. The village is under the control of armed opposition factions. Anas, [a photographer and report maker](#) for Hama Media Office, from Zezoun village, born in 1996, has a high school diploma, unmarried.

SNHR contacted Anas who offered his account¹, **“The village was heavy shelled by the Syrian regime artillery on that day. One of the shells landed behind me and some shrapnel injured me in the left shoulder. I was immediately rushed to Qastoun Health Center in Qastoun village, western suburbs of Hama governorate where I received the necessary treatment. I left the facility a few hours later. The shelling didn’t result in any deaths or injuries but the house I was in was moderately damaged.”**



¹ Via Facebook on August 19, 2018



- Arrest

Omar Kalo

Saturday, August 25, 2018, Syrian regime forces arrested Omar at a checkpoint between Aleppo city and Manbej city, north-eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Omar, has a degree in media from Damascus University, works as a news anchor for Rudaw TV Channel, from Arsalan Tash village, eastern Ein al Arab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1977.



B. Russian forces

- Acts of killing

Ahmad Mahmoud Aziza

Friday, August 10, 2018, Ahmad died of injuries caused by shrapnel that infected most of his body where fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian fired a missile that landed near him as he was tending to the wounded from a previous bombing by the same warplanes on Urm al Kubra village, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The village is under the control of armed opposition factions.

Ahmad, a reporter and photographer for Aleppo News Media Network and Eyoun Syria Network, from Aleppo city, born in 1998, has an intermediate education certificate, unmarried.



SNHR contacted the media worker Mahmoud Aziza², known as Abu al Izz al Halabi and Ahmad's father. Mahmoud told us that fixed-wing warplanes from the Russian air force carried out a missile airstrike on Urm al Kubra village. Ahmad headed for the attacked site to cover the bombing, **“Ahmad arrived at the site before the rescue teams, so he saw that it is more important to help rescue the victims than cover the incident. As he was aiding a little girl, the warplanes came back and attacked the site again. Ahmad was severely wounded in most of his body and he died almost immediately around 19:00.”** Mahmoud added that he was told that his son Ahmad was missing, **“So I went to look for him at every medical center and I didn't find him. I then went searching for him to where they put the dead bodies from the massacre and I found him there. Praise be to God for all his blessings.”**

² Via Facebook on August 25, 2018



C. Extremist Islamic groups

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham

- Arrest

Karam Saed al Haj

Tuesday, July 10, 2018, Karam was arrested by gunmen from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham as he was heading to Atama village, in northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, from Afrin city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. He was released on Monday, August 20, 2018.

Karam Saed al Haj, media worker and a member of the civil defense, from al Dmair city, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate.



V. Recommendations

Security Council

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

OHCHR

Condemn the targeting of media workers in Syria and shed light on their sacrifice and suffering.

Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the targeting of media workers specifically, given their integral role in recording incidents in Syria.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International and Arabic media institutions

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

Finally, all parties have to respect the international humanitarian law in their areas of control in relation to the protection of civilians and especially media workers and their equipment.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most heartfelt condolences go to the victims' families. We also would like to thank the friends and families of media workers who contributed effectively to this report.





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