



When a Wedding Turns into a Massacre

A wedding bombed in al Qaboun neighborhood in the capital Damascus

Report methodology

The report draws upon a field-visit by SNHR member in Damascus city “Dr. Majd al Masri”. Dr. Majd met and treated a number of the injured who fell in the bombing, in addition to seeing and examining the dead bodies.

Details

On Friday, June 16, 2014, Syrian regime forces targeted, seemingly deliberately, a co-wedding for two of the neighborhood’s youngsters, as two heavy mortar shells fell in the place where the wedding was taking place, killing eight of the wedding’s attendants. Also, more than 40 others were injured. The shelling was simultaneous with another shelling on the neighborhood using the B10 in the public road to terrify the residents. Also, the sniper stationing above the Special Units building opened fire randomly on the neighborhoods buildings.

Investigations showed that Syrian regime forces were completely aware of the time and place of the wedding, so they targeted the area to kill and wound as many residents as possible. It should be noted that Syrian regime forces targeted another wedding on Thursday, June 15, where some people were wounded with no victims recorded.

It seems that these incidents are to terrify and terrorize the neighborhood residents in order to coerce them into agreeing to the settlement and truce on the Syrian regime’s terms.





“Dr. Majd al Masri”, SNHR member, was in al Qaboun neighborhood that day and visited the incident location:

“I headed on Friday afternoon to al Qaboun neighborhood along with some friends. On our way there, I saw a car with a “Arada Shamiya” (A group that performs a folklore dance). We learned later that the group was headed for a wedding for two of the neighborhood’s youths near the Grand Mosque. On my way out of the neighborhood with the sunset, I saw a number of cars heading for the Grand Mosque area, and I saw tens of people gathering and they were in panic. I asked, and was told that the wedding area was shelled with mortar shells. It was revealed later that the shells were fired from the branch of the Special Units that is on the borders of al Qaboun neighborhood. After a while, we heard another explosion, which, we found out later, was from another shell that fell in the same place. I headed for the makeshift hospital, and tens of people were outside the hospital. I went inside and the scene was horrifying. Blood all over the ground, and on the walls, and on the beds. A number of victims were covered in blood, and others were in pain from the injuries. I counted myself more than 15 wounded on the beds and on the floor.”

“I rushed to check on the patients. All of them had different injuries, so we got to the most serious injuries first:

- There was a guy on the floor, and he was unconscious. I tried to perform CPR, and a colleague tried to wake him up. However, after a few failed attempts, we noticed that his pupil stretched and his heart stopped. That guy died as his friends were around me trying to talk to him, and calling his name – Alaa- but it was no use. We lost the first wounded.

- I went to another bed, and a wounded was there as he was heavily bleeding. I asked the doctor about his condition, and he told me that he died as well.

- Then I turned to another wounded who had some wounds on his face. I stitched his face and he was also suffering from a number of shrapnel inside him. After I was finished, I stitched another wounded who had wounds in his face and his leg was fractured and was heavily bleeding, where we put a band on the injured area to stop the bleeding.”





“More and more wounded were coming in every five minutes. The hospital was completely overwhelmed, so the paramedics put them on the ground. Some of the cases were extremely dire. An hour later, a team from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent arrived and transferred some of the serious cases to other hospitals. Residents and activists helped spread the news and called out for help. A medical team came from the nearby Barza neighborhood to help al Qaboun medical team. Some of the cases were also transferred to Barza neighborhood. The people who came with the patients were trying to help the doctors however they can, as they would hold gauze and serum, and try to clean for their friends, while other people came to donate blood.”

“We tried to collect information about the incidents from eyewitnesses. I asked some of the wounded about what happened. Abu Abdullah told me: ‘I was walking in the street, and a mortar shell fell and wounded a large number of people at the wedding. I ran inside to help. While I was there, another shell fell on us. I was wounded, and I needed someone to aid me, and then I was transferred to the hospital.’”

“The eyewitness Abu Mohammad, who was attending the wedding told me: we were at the wedding inside the house, while others were doing the Arada. And then we were shelled with a mortar shell. We waited for some of time, because we were afraid the shelling might go on, and then we went out, and a second shell fell. I lost consciousness and was transferred to the hospital.”

“I was able to document four killed in the shelling and about 40 wounded, including 17 serious cases. Two patients underwent amputation operations – one of them lost both of his legs. More than four thoracentesis operations were performed, and two arteriovenous fistulas, in addition to a number of limb fractures. The two grooms were injured as well.”

Appendixes and attachments

1- Victims' names

Mohammad al Buqa'ei (Abu Shadi) told us that they were all besieged in Eastern Ghouta (His father, mother, and brothers) and they managed to get to al Qaboun neighborhood on Friday morning. They met their son for a few hours before he was killed in the indiscriminate shelling.

Zaher Mihi al Din al Sagheir, known as Abu Shaker, his wife was nine-month pregnant, and he was expecting a child in a few days according to his family.





Alaa al Madani, known as Abu Zaher, and Talal Tu'ma (Abu Nadim), both were members of al Arada al Shamiya band.

2- [Videos](#) showing [the victims](#) and [the wounded](#)

[Pictures](#) showing the place where [the shells landed](#)

Conclusions:

1. SNHR affirms that the bombardment on the wedding indiscriminate and directed against unarmed civilians. Thus, government forces and Al Shabiha have violated the international human rights law which protects the right to life in addition to being committed in a non-International armed conflict so it mounts to war crime as all elements were fulfilled.
2. SNHR deems what happened in al Qaboun neighborhood, the murder crime, a crime against humanity because it is not the first case but it has been systematically repeated throughout Syrian governorates in a widespread manner.
3. The indiscriminate attacks by government forces are violation of customary international humanitarian law where government forces launched several shells on populated areas rather than targeting specific military objects.
4. Those attacks, particularly the bombardment, caused casualties, injures or damaged civilian objects. Moreover, there are strong indicators that the damaged was great compared with the military benefits.
5. The volume of the massacre in addition to its nature, the amount of power that was used, and the indiscriminate and coordinated nature of bombardment cannot be without high instructions and it's a state policy.

Recommendations:

United Nations and Security Council

1. Refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court, and stop disrupting the Resolutions that the Council should be adopting with regard to the Syrian government, because this sends the wrong message to all the dictatorships in the world, and enhance the culture of crime.
2. Impose immediate sanctions on all those who are involved in widespread violations of human rights.
3. Bind the Syrian government to give access to relief and human rights organizations, and the Commission of Inquiry, and journalists and stop disrupting their work.





4. Insure the end of weapon imports to the Syrian government, as those are being used in widespread attacks against civilians.
5. The Security Council has to uphold its responsibility in maintaining security and civil peace in Syria, because the Syrian government's violations constitute a blatant threat to the international peace and security.
6. List the militias that are fighting along the Syrian government and who perpetrated wide massacres, such as Hezbollah and other Shiite groups and the National Defense Army and Shabiha, on the international list of terrorist organization, in addition to ISIS that perpetrated several crimes in the areas that are outside the government's control.
7. Uphold the norm of "Responsibility to Protect" which was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, as it is direly needed there.
8. Stop considering the Syrian government as an official party, in light of its crimes against humanity, regarding the relief aspect and stop providing it with the largest portion of material and financial aids, which are not being delivered to the people who are in needed in most cases.

Human Rights Council:

1. Demand the Security Council and the concerned international institutions to shoulder their responsibilities in regard to what is happening to Syrian people like murder, arrest, rape, and displacement.
2. Apply pressure on the Syrian government to cease murder, torture and release all kidnapped persons.
3. Hold Syrian government's allies and supporters- Russia, Iran, and China- morally and materially responsible for what is happening to the children of Syria.
4. Give the disastrous situation of victims' families in Syria greater interest and seriousness.

The Arab League:

1. Impose comprehensive sanctions on all the officials who are involved in committing crimes in Syria, and encourage the states of the world to do so.
2. Increase the humanitarian aids, especially in education and health sectors, and take care of the Syrian refugees' interest in the Arb states.
3. Call on the Security Council to implement the aforementioned recommendations.
4. Ask the Human Rights Council and the United Nations to give the case of daily murder its right of interest and follow-up.





5. Give the case the serious and great interest and follow-up, and try to provide with the victims' families psychological, material and educational care.
6. Apply political and diplomatic pressure on the main Syrian regime's allies- Russia, Iran and China- to ban them from providing the international and political cover and protection of all committed crimes against the Syrian people and to hold them morally and materially responsible for all Syrian government violations.

The Syrian government:

1. Stop all Human Rights violations immediately.
2. Respect its international commitments that includes the protection of civilians in the time of war, and respect the rules of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.
3. Immediately give the Commission of Inquiry access and facilitate its work and cooperate with the OHCHR and national human rights organizations.

International Commission of Inquiry:

Stop depicting the conflict as it is between two equal parties in crimes, power and central decision-making, and to describe the crime as it is without mitigation for political purposes. It also has to increase its cadres that is concerned with the Syrian case due to the volume of the daily crimes which would insure a more comprehensive and complete documentation.

