

The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in July 2022

Russian Forces and Their Syrian Allies Escalate Their Military Operations in Northwest Syria

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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 analyzes in Syria.

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I. Introduction and Methodology

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report focuses on the human rights situation in Syria, which SNHR documented in May 2022, and catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights attacks on civilian objects, which SNHR's team was able to document during this period. To find out more about our working [methodology](#) in documenting and archiving data, please visit the following link that explains this in detail.

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. Summary of the Most Notable Events in July

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

In July, SNHR documented a noticeable increase in the frequency of artillery shelling carried out by Syrian regime forces in the Idlib region in northwest Syria, compared to previous months this year. This shelling in July was focused on the villages and towns of Jabal al Zaweya in the southern, eastern, and western Idlib suburbs, as well as on Sahl al Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama and the western suburbs of Aleppo, close to the line of contact with the armed opposition factions. The towns and villages of the northern and southern suburbs of Idlib and the northern suburbs of Aleppo, far from the contact lines, were also subjected to ground attacks by Syrian regime forces. One of these attacks [on July 4 resulted in the death of a woman and her unborn baby in Ma'aret al Na'san village, northeast of Idlib](#). In the last quarter of July, the intensity of ground attacks by Syrian regime forces on the southern suburbs of Idlib and [the western suburbs of Aleppo](#) escalated; a ground attack on July 30 on Kafr Ta'al town in the western suburbs of Aleppo resulted in the death of [two children](#).

We also documented Syrian regime forces' targeting of some roads in the areas nearby the contact lines using anti-armor missiles, in addition to sniper attacks by Syrian regime forces targeting civilians residing in those areas; [we recorded the death of a child](#) on July 4 at the hands of a Syrian regime forces sniper, while the child was inside his home in Afes village, east of Idlib.

A number of areas in Daraa governorate also witnessed a security escalation by Syrian regime forces, which imposed a security cordon around Tafas city, west of Daraa, and erected earth berms around the city, under the pretext of the presence of wanted persons there. Syrian regime forces' artillery shelling of farmland surrounding [the city on July 27 killed one civilian and wounded several others](#).

At the end of July, Suwayda governorate witnessed clashes between personnel from the local branch of the Syrian regime's Military Security division and local armed groups, after an armed group affiliated with the regime's Military Intelligence, led by Raji Falhout, kidnapped a civilian in Shahba city, on July 23, after which gunmen from the kidnap victim's family, the 'al Tawil', cut off the Damascus- Suwayda International Road. Events subsequently escalated, with an increase in kidnappings by both parties (militias affiliated with the Syrian regime's Military Security branch, and civil armed groups), then turned into clashes between the two sides on July 26, which resulted in the killing of 23 militants from both parties over three days. The clashes also resulted in one girl sustaining a head injury when she was hit by shrapnel from mortar shells fired by the regime-affiliated Raji Falhout militia at Salim village in the suburbs of Suwayda governorate.

July also saw an increase in the frequency of Russian overflights and air attacks on northwest Syria compared to the previous two months. A Russian airstrike on an IDP shelter [in al Jadida village of Jisr al Shoghour city, in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate on July 22](#), caused a massacre of six civilians, including four child siblings. [The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor](#) issued a statement on the incident, calling on the International community, led by the United Nations and its relevant bodies, to take urgent measures to ensure the protection of civilians in northwest Syria from the indiscriminate airstrikes by Russian warplanes. The statement indicated that many lives could already have been saved if the UN and international actors had decided to activate the principle of accountability for crimes committed against Syrian civilians. Commenting on the massacre, UNICEF published a [statement](#) on July 23 in which it said that at least five children were killed and nine injured in the west of Idlib. The statement indicated that in 2021, 70 percent of grave violations recorded against children in Syria occurred in the northwest. The SNHR is set to issue a report providing details of the incident.

We also documented that Russian helicopters flew almost daily over Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo during July, coinciding with Syrian regime forces' bringing military build-up all along the front lines with the Syrian National Army factions in Manbej and Ein al Arab areas. On July 18, the pro-Syrian regime [al Watan newspaper](#) noted that Syrian regime forces "[continued to strengthen and expand their points of deployment in the northern and northeastern suburbs of Aleppo](#)." The newspaper added that the Syrian regime had brought new military reinforcements to the vicinity of Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo. On the same day, [the Syrian regime's news agency, SANA](#), also published footage showing military vehicles, which the agency said were regime military reinforcements sent to Ein Aisa city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa and Ein al Arab (Kobani) city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo.

We have also documented an increase in the military movements and field exercises jointly conducted by Russian and Syrian regime forces in recent months. [The Russian Sputnik news agency](#) noted on July 4 that military forces affiliated with the Russian Army's Paratroopers Division had arrived in al Qameshli city in northeast Syria, adding that "[Russian military transport planes transported more than 500 Russian paratroopers to al Qameshli area](#)."

On July 30, the Russian [RusVesna](#) website reported that the Russian forces supervised amphibious and air-to-air military exercises between Syrian regime forces and "[Kurdish forces](#)" for the first time in history, according to the website, in preparation for what the website called "[detering the Turkish aggression](#)." The website further indicated that the Kurdish artillery forces had conducted training exercises to enable them to provide fire support to Syrian regime forces.

In July, we recorded that Syrian Democratic Forces continued to launch ground attacks on the areas of the northwestern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo and the northern suburbs of Raqqqa. An attack [on Kuwait al Rahma IDP Camp](#) near Afrin city on July 24 resulted in the death of a civilian and the injury of several others, in addition to completely destroying three residential units and partially destroying two others. Another attack by the same forces [on Izaz city on July 25 resulted in the death of a displaced woman](#).

Tal Tamar city and surrounding villages in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka, which are under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, were subjected to intense artillery and mortar shelling during July by the Syrian National Army forces stationed in Ras al Ein area in the western suburbs of Hasaka, which didn't cause any casualties among civilians or result in any change in the areas of control.

On July 22, an armed opposition faction, the National Front for the Liberation of Syria, used missile launchers to fire several missiles at Nabl al Khatib village in western Hama governorate, killing [two civilians, including a woman](#).

In terms of bombings, in July, we monitored the explosions of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the governorates of Daraa, Hama, Aleppo, and Hasaka. The explosion of one IED in Tafas city in Daraa suburbs [on July 17 resulted in the death of a woman and wounded four of her children, along with two other women](#). The explosion of another IED [in a local market in Ras al Ein city](#) in the suburbs of Hasaka on July 19, wounded five civilians and caused moderate damage to several shops.

July also saw continuing civilian deaths due to explosions caused by landmines [in various governorates and regions of Syria](#), with these incidents being concentrated especially in the governorates of Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus Suburbs, and with most of the landmine victims this month being children. SNHR documented the deaths of 14 civilians, including six children, resulting from landmine explosions in July, bringing the total death toll caused by these munitions since the beginning of 2022 to 90 civilians, including 45 children and nine women.

July also saw the killing of civilians in various governorates, mostly in Daraa governorate, [by gunmen whom SNHR has been unable to identify](#). We also monitored the continuation of killings by shooting in al Hawl Camp, where we documented the killing of three civilians, [including two women](#), in July.

On July 12, [the official White House](#) website published a statement by US President Joe Biden in which he said that US forces had launched an airstrike in Syria that killed Maher al Agal, "[one of the top leaders of ISIS](#)," in the statement's words.

On July 2, [the Syrian regime's SANA news agency](#) reported that Israeli warplanes had bombed several poultry farms in the vicinity of al Hamidiya town, south of Tartus city, injuring civilians and causing material damage. On July 3, [The Time of Israel](#) newspaper reported that the attack targeted "a weapon that was transported by sea, possibly using Iranian ships that docked in Tartus port last week." The newspaper added that the attack came amid "a new move by the Iranians in Syria to introduce an air defense system to protect their military interests." On July 21, [SANA](#) reported that the Israeli warplanes had bombed some locations in the vicinity of Damascus city, killing three Syrian regime soldiers, in addition to causing material losses. On July 22, the Syrian regime's [Radio Sham FM](#) reported on its official Facebook page that the death toll from Israeli airstrikes the previous day had risen to five, "including officers."

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian regime forces continued in July to pursue and arrest individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status with the Syrian regime in areas that had previously concluded settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. We documented random arrests of Syrian citizens in the governorates of Damascus Suburbs, Hasaka, and Raqqa, with most of these occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests, as well as at checkpoints. We believe that these campaigns were launched on the basis of malicious security reports, including citizens who were arrested on the pretext that they had failed to perform their reserve military service.

We also documented arrests targeting dozens of returnees to areas under the control of the Syrian regime after being residents/refugees outside the country; according to our monitoring, the main reason most of them returned to Syria was to spend the Eid al Adha holiday with their families. We also recorded the arrest of other people while they were trying to enter Syrian territory through illegal crossings traversing the borders of the State of Lebanon. We also documented random kidnappings of citizens in Suwayda governorate carried out by personnel from the Syrian regime's Military Security Force, with most of these kidnappings occurring at temporary checkpoints in the governorate under the pretext that the kidnapped individuals supposedly belonged to the Syrian Liwa Party and/or had dealings with foreign parties. We documented arrests carried out by personnel from the Syrian regime's Criminal Security Force in various governorates targeting a number of civilians, including lawyers, in connection with their communication with a number of social media pages that criticize corruption in regime-held areas; those arrested faced charges related to the regime's cybercrime law.

Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in July, with the number detained and forcibly disappeared increasing this month as SDF personnel continued carrying out campaigns of mass raids and detentions, targeting civilians on the pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters. We also documented detentions targeting dozens of civilians, including children, during campaigns of mass raids and detentions and at checkpoints with the aim of taking them to SDF recruitment camps. These arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Raqqqa, Hasaka, and Aleppo. We also recorded the detention of a number of civilians in connection with criticizing the living and service conditions and arrests in the areas under SDF control. On July 30, Syrian Democratic Forces' security patrols detained/arrested at least 16 media professionals, two of them women, in raids on their locations in Raqqqa city, on charges of "espionage". The SNHR issued a [statement of condemnation](#), calling for the detainees' immediate release.

We also recorded Syrian Democratic Forces kidnapping children with the aim of taking them to its military training and recruitment camps and forcibly conscripting them, preventing their families from communicating with them, and failing to disclose their fate.

July also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham detaining civilians, including media activists and politicians, with these arrests concentrated in Idlib governorate; most of these arrests occurred due to the detainees expressing opinions critical of the HTS's management of areas under its control. These detentions were carried out arbitrarily in the form of raids in which HTS members stormed their victims' homes, often breaking down the doors, or abducted their victims while they were traveling or passing through temporary checkpoints. We also recorded detentions targeting a number of civilians, including children, after beating them in Hazanou village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

Meanwhile, all Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in July, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting individuals coming from areas controlled by the Syrian regime. In addition, we documented detentions carried out under an ethnic pretext, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under all Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army's control in Aleppo governorate. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions through the judiciary, with these arrests also carried out without presenting any clear charges against those being detained. In addition to these cases, we also documented raids and detentions carried out by Syrian National Army personnel, targeting civilians, including women, on charges of collaborating with Syrian Democratic Forces. These incidents were concentrated in some villages near Afrin city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Regarding living conditions:

Living and economic conditions in all regions of Syria continue to deteriorate drastically and constantly at all levels. The areas under the control of Syrian regime forces are still subject to the policy of electricity rationing, with the period of [electricity connection in some areas not exceeding 30 minutes every 5.5 hours](#), which increases the suffering of civilians already enduring the searing summer heat, accompanied by shortages of drinking water, in addition to a continuing rise in the prices of basic grocery staples and their unavailability in the markets. The regime loyalist [al Watan newspaper](#) reported on July 24, “Sugar is not found in the Syrian trading halls, and it is hidden in the local markets.” The newspaper quoted Haider al Youssef, director of the Syrian regime government’s Syria for Trading branch in Hama, as stating that sugar and rice are totally unavailable for direct sale in government-affiliated food sales halls in all Syria’s governorates.

As for fuel, the crisis of domestic gas subsidized by the Syrian regime’s government has continued, with gas prices rising at a rate that exceeds citizens’ ability to buy it. On July 18, [Tishreen Newspaper, a pro-Syrian regime outlet](#), published pictures showing dozens of citizens in different areas waiting for public transport which is often absent as a result of the ongoing fuel crisis.

Some areas under the control of the Syrian regime forces also suffered from a crisis of disruption in the supply of medicines for some chronic diseases in the medical centers run by the Syrian regime’s government. [Al Watan newspaper](#) also reported on July 25 that some thalassemia patients had not received their medication doses for nearly 6 months, putting their lives at risk.

During the month of July, we observed a noticeable increase in emigration from most areas under the control of the Syrian regime forces, whether through legal or illegal routes. Despite the high cost of obtaining a passport (300-800 US dollars), immigration and passport centers in all governorates are witnessing daily overcrowding by citizens wishing to obtain these passports in order to emigrate. Salam Sa-faf, the Syrian regime’s Minister of Administrative Development, said on July 6, in her speech at the launch of [the official al Ekhbariya channel](#), that there were about 40,413 unfilled vacancies for which no-one had applied in the central employment competition, more than half the total of 80,000 job opportunities. This indicates a severe shortage of workers in these areas.

In northwestern Syria, civilians continued to suffer from the high prices of consumer goods, supplies, and fuels, in light of the almost total lack of purchasing power among those living in the region, due to the spread of unemployment, high poverty rates, and low labor wages. The high temperatures also increased the already extreme suffering of civilians in the area, especially those residing in camps, in the absence of basic services of electricity and drinking water, with the prices of these essential items having risen in a way that exceeds the ability of civilians in this area to secure or afford them. Also, the region is still affected by the continuous decline in the exchange value of the Turkish currency - used in trading in the region - against the US dollar, which negatively affects the prices of all items and increases their prices continuously.

As for northeastern Syria, the residents continue suffering from a socio-economic crisis in this region, similar to the other Syrian regions. In conjunction with the increasing unemployment rate and the rise in the prices of some food items and fuel, living conditions have further worsened, especially in light of the tense security situation in the region, instability, and the spread of administrative corruption, in addition to the failure of the service sectors to secure the needs of civilians, especially in terms of drinking water, electricity and the requirements of the agricultural sector. On July 18, the [Reach Initiative](#) stated in its report on the humanitarian and living situation in Hasakah governorate, that most families in the governorate, including displaced people and local residents, are struggling to meet basic needs, in light of the continued deterioration of the economic situation, with the report adding that nearly 90% of families face difficulties and problems in obtaining adequate food because they do not have enough money.

We also observed an increase in the number of drowning cases in the bodies of water located in northwest Syria and northeastern Syria in July compared to previous months, with residents of the region resorting to the cooling waters in an effort to find relief from the searing temperatures, although most of these bodies of water are not safe for swimmers.

In regard to asylum, displacement and forced displacement:

The massive suffering of IDPs **in northwest Syria** has continued, especially in light of the deteriorating economic conditions and the increase of the level of needs, which has reached record amounts given the reduction in external support required to cover those needs, more especially in light of the stifling summer temperatures. In July, we also monitored the continuation of fires breaking out in the IDP camps in the Idlib areas. One fire of an unknown cause, which broke out in [a camp in the northwest of Idlib city on July 26, caused the death of one girl, and injured two of her siblings](#), as well as burning down three IDPs' tents.

Regarding northeastern Syria, [Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#) said on July 18 that the family of an Australian teenager, who was being held in northeastern Syria, had reported his death, according to information they received from an Australian government official on July 17, without explaining the causes of death. The organization stated that the family of the Australian teenager, Yusuf Zahab, learned in January 2021 that he had contracted tuberculosis, and that he had been injured in the head and arm during the battle of the al Sina'a Prison in Hasaka city in January 2022, according to a distress call made by Yusuf to HRW. The organization added that Yusuf's family has repeatedly asked the Australian government to repatriate him to Australia. The United Nations also said on July 24 that a group of [human rights experts at the United Nations](#) expressed their dismay after the death of the Australian boy was confirmed. The experts called on all governments that have children detained in the northeastern region of Syria to repatriate them as soon as possible.

Regarding the camps in northeastern Syria and the repatriation of detainees held there in July, [the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#) said in a statement issued on July 5 that French authorities had repatriated 35 French children as well as 16 women from the camps in northeastern Syria, as well as 16 women. The statement added that a French "mother" was among those repatriated within the same operation. The women have been handed over to the relevant judicial authorities, according to the ministry's statement. On July 13, [HRW said](#) that the French government should repatriate all the French nationals in the camps in northeastern Syria, as 160 French children and 75 French women are still arbitrarily detained in the area under deplorable conditions. The organization added that seven of the children who were repatriated in the process are unaccompanied minors, and all the women are mothers of French children who were repatriated by the French authorities with them or who had previously been repatriated.

On July 22, [the Russian Interfax news agency](#) quoted the media office of Russia's Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights that the Russian authorities had repatriated 11 Russian children from Syria. According to the Department of Foreign Relations of the Self-Management in North and East Syria's [Facebook account](#), the assistant of Russia's Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights visited the Department's office on July 21 to repatriate children from northeastern Syria.

On July 25, [Agence France-Presse \(AFP\)](#) reported that the Self-Management in North and East Syria handed over 42 women and 104 children of Tajikistani nationality to a delegation from the State of Tajikistan; the repatriated individuals, who had been held in al Hawl and al Rouj camps in Hasaka governorate in northeastern Syria, were members of ISIS fighters' families.

Regarding Syrian refugees, [the Lebanese National News Agency](#) reported on July 4, that Issam Sharaf El-Din, Minister of the Displaced in the Lebanese caretaker government, said that the Lebanese state has a plan to return 15,000 Syrian refugees to Syria per month, adding that "It is totally unacceptable that the displaced Syrians should not return to their country after the war in it has ended and it has become safe."

Commenting on this issue, [HRW said](#) on July 6 that the forcible return of Syrian refugees by the Lebanese authorities is illegal and unsafe, and that the Lebanese government's plan to return 15,000 Syrian refugees per month to Syria is a step that would constitute a clear violation of Lebanon's international obligations, and that the international donor governments should publicly oppose forced or forcible returns to Syria.

On July 24, the [Lebanon 24 website](#) reported that a number of Lebanese youths set fire to a shop inside a Syrian refugee camp in the town of Tel Hayat in the Akkar district of northern Lebanon, which led to a fire inside the camp and the burning of a number of tents, as well as causing the explosion of a number of gas cylinders inside the camp.

On July 25, Amnesty International said [in a statement](#) that since July 14, 50 asylum seekers - 47 Syrians and three Palestinians, including children and women - remain stranded in harsh conditions on one of the islands of the Evros River separating Turkey and Greece, without food or safe drinking water. The organization added that the Greek authorities must urgently rescue them, provide support, health care, and give them access to asylum procedures in Greece and protection from refoulement. On July 27, the organization published an update in which it said that the 50 people had been deported to Turkey, quoting the Greek Council for Refugees and HumanRights360 as saying that asylum seekers in need of health care are in hospital while the Turkish authorities are detaining others.

On the political and human rights level:

On July 2, a consultative meeting of Arab foreign ministers was held in Lebanon, during which Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra confirmed that his country "does not mind the return of Syria to take its seat in the Arab League, and it has no problem with that," according to Russia's state-run [RT agency](#). Lamamra arrived in the Syrian capital on July 24 on [an official two-day visit](#). These steps come as part of Algeria's strenuous efforts to restore normalization with the Syrian regime.

On July 5, Amnesty International issued a report entitled '[Unbearable living conditions](#)', in which it said that 1.7 million people, out of the total displaced population in northwestern Syria, live in camps, where 58% of the population are children and 22% are women; adding "[more than half of the internally displaced population in the camps live in one-room tents.](#)" The report indicated that these displaced persons have no real opportunities at present to return to their homes in areas controlled by the Syrian regime forces, due to the continuous violations committed by those forces, including arbitrary detention and torture. The report added that since the Syrian regime forces lost control of the northwest region of Syria, they have cut off electricity and water supplies, obstructed the delivery of aid, and attacked camps, medical facilities and schools. The organization stressed in its report that the Security Council must ensure the renewal of the aid delivery mechanism through the Bab al Hawa crossing to northwest Syria.

On July 8, [the Human Rights Council adopted Resolution No. A/HRC/50/L.5/REV.1](#) on the situation of human rights in Syria, in which it condemned all acts of sexual and gender-based violence committed by the parties to the conflict in Syria since 2011, primarily by the Syrian regime, which has practiced rape and sexual and gender-based violence against detainees in detention centers, including children. The resolution stressed that acts of sexual and gender-based violence, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, can constitute crimes against humanity, and that acts of sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict can constitute war crimes. The resolution also stressed the need to put an end to impunity.

The SNHR welcomes the council's decision and thanks all the countries that voted in favor of the rights of the Syrian people, and condemns the countries of [Armenia, Bolivia, China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Venezuela](#) which expressed their support for the Syrian regime's violations through voting against a resolution in favor of the Syrian people.

On July 11, the United Nations issued [its annual report](#) "[Children and Armed Conflict](#)" for the year 2021. The report includes a section on trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed. The report stated that the United Nations has verified the occurrence of 2,271 grave violations against children in Syria, and documented 898 killing and maiming operations against children in Syria. The Syrian regime forces were responsible for 301 violations. The report also documented 45 attacks on schools and hospitals, including attacks on staff working in them, of which the Syrian regime forces were responsible for 23 attacks. The report called on all parties to end and prevent violations, and to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

On July 13, [the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) reported that around 16,000 IDP movements were tracked across Syria in May 2022, an increase of 21% over the numbers tracked in April 2022, when most of the IDP movements were concentrated in northwestern Syria. A total of 81% of these movements occurred within and between the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib, while the reason behind these movements was the pursuit of access to services and livelihoods.

On July 16, the website of the office of the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen, published a [statement](#) in which he said that the Special Envoy regretted that holding the Ninth Session of the Small Body of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva from 25 to 29 July 2022 was no longer possible. The statement added that the Special Envoy stressed the importance of all the stakeholders in this conflict protecting and firewalling the Syrian political process from their differences elsewhere in the world.

The delegation of the Syrian Negotiation Commission in the Constitutional Committee also published a [press release](#) on the same day in which it explained the reason for the delay, stating that "the delegation of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic would be ready to participate in the ninth session only if the requests of the Russian Federation, as it called them, were met." Commenting on this, Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General, said on July 18 during a [briefing](#) at the United Nations Headquarters, "We do reaffirm the neutrality of Switzerland as a venue for much of the work that the United Nations does, and we want to emphasize the holding of substantive talks and we will see what happens next. At this stage, Mr. Pedersen will continue his discussions with the parties."

On July 18, [the United Nations](#) said that in recent years, the abduction of children has risen steeply in situations concerning the children and armed conflict agenda, adding that Syria is among the countries that saw the greatest numbers of children abducted in 2020 and 2021, with girls having been increasingly targeted at an alarming rate.

On July 19, the Tehran summit, which brought together the presidents of the guarantor states of the Astana Talks, namely Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi, was held in the Iranian capital, in which the three leaders stressed, according to the final statement published by [the Russian presidential website](#), "the necessity to maintain calm on the ground by fully implementing all agreements on Idlib." The agreement also included to assign their representatives with the task of holding the 19th International Meeting on Syria in the Astana format by the end of 2022.

On July 19, the US Department of State released its [annual 2022 Report on Trafficking in Persons](#) around the world. The report stated that Syria is among the 11 governments that have “a documented policy or pattern of human trafficking, or human trafficking within government-funded programs, or forced labor in government medical services or other sectors, sexual slavery in government camps, or the employment or recruitment of children.” On the recruitment of children, the report said that the use of children in the fighting in Syria is still common, as, since the beginning of 2018, international observers have reported continuing incidents of recruitment and use of children in fighting by the Syrian regime forces and affiliated militias and by other armed parties. As for Syrian refugees, the report noted that the adults and children among the estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon are at risk of sex trafficking and forced labor.

On July 19, [the Middle East Eye](#) website reported that the United Nations is still contracting in Syria with companies with ties to the President of the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, through their purchase contracts for goods and services, as shown by new procurement data issued by the United Nations the previous week. The website added that the new data also showed that United Nations agencies have spent a total of \$81.6 million at the Four Seasons Hotel in Damascus since 2014, with Samer al Fawz, who is on the EU and US sanctions lists and is close to the Assad family, owning the largest stake in the hotel, while the Syrian regime government’s Ministry of Tourism also owns a share.

On July 20, [Amnesty International](#) asserted that the United Nations General Assembly must bear the responsibility for ensuring that aid continues to reach civilians in need in Syria, and that the Syrian regime and the Russian veto power must not stand in the way of providing humanitarian assistance to millions of civilians in desperate need in northwest Syria, as this amounts to violating their rights to life. The organization added that the General Assembly must state unequivocally: International law is clear; the Security Council authorization should not be needed to deliver humanitarian aid to those in need.

On the renewal of the UN resolution to allow cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria:

On July 8, Russia used its veto power during a Security Council session to discuss extending the cross-border aid delivery mechanism with Turkey to northwest Syria. At the same session, [France](#), the United Kingdom and the United States voted against the text of a Russian draft resolution to extend the aid delivery mechanism that extends the aid delivery mechanism for six months, while the 10 temporary member states of the Security Council abstained from voting. Commenting on the Russian veto, [the International Rescue Committee](#) issued a statement on the same day condemning Russia’s veto, and said that members of the UN Security Council should be guided by humanitarian imperatives rather than politics, and should ensure that Syrians in need, wherever they are, can be reached through the most direct routes.

On July 12, [the UN Security Council](#) adopted a draft resolution in which Ireland and Norway submitted a proposal regarding the mechanism for the delivery of cross-border aid to northwestern Syria; the new Security Council Resolution [No. 2642 \(2022\)](#) mandated the renewal of humanitarian deliveries into northwest Syria from Türkiye through the Bab al Hawa border crossing through January 2023, and called for an additional six-month extension which will require another separate resolution; 12 countries voted in favor of the resolution, while three countries, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, abstained.

On July 21, [the United Nations General Assembly](#) held a meeting to discuss the mechanism for cross-border aid delivery to northwest Syria and Russia's use of its veto in the Security Council on July 8 against extending the mechanism for an additional year. The meeting was held under the new mandate of the General Assembly to convene within 10 working days in the event of a veto in the Security Council. Russia's delegate justified his country's use of its "veto" on the draft resolution to extend the aid delivery mechanism for an additional year by saying that the draft resolution that was submitted does not outline a specific way how the renewal would be ended if Council members deem progress to be insufficient, while the US representative said, "Russia has vetoed 17 Council resolutions on Syria since the start of the conflict there, seeking to shield 'the Assad regime' from accountability and prop up its tattered standing in the international community." The representative of Ireland described Russia's solitary veto as "an unconscionable act, placing the critical lifeline for 4 million Syrians at risk."

On the course of advocacy and the pursuit of accountability:

On July 7, [the European Court of Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#) ruled that Greece had to pay a total of 330,000 euros in respect of the nonpecuniary damage sustained by 16 asylum-seekers, including Syrians, who were aboard a boat carrying 27 people in the Aegean Sea in January 2014 when the Greek coast guard deliberately sank the vessel while they were trying to move the boat to the Turkish coast, which led to the death of 11 of the people on board, including relatives of the plaintiffs. The court added that the Greek authorities could have done more to save the refugees, but they failed to do so. On July 8, [HRW issued](#) a statement saying that based on this judgment, the Greek government should immediately cease all violations at its borders and establish an independent and effective border monitoring mechanism.

On July 19, the SNHR issued a [statement](#) revealing that the report of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the general situation in Syria issued in June 2022 relied on the SNHR as the first source of information with 49 quotes. The report covered many topics and mainly talked about the human rights situation in Syria, the political developments, and the security situation during the period between May 2021 and May 2022. The report also addressed the political and security situation and the situation of IDPs and refugees. The report stressed that internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees returning to regime-controlled areas of Syria have been subjected to numerous violations by Syrian regime forces.

On July 21, the European Union issued a [decision](#) to include 4 individuals and one entity to the list of sanctions related to the situation in Syria. Those named in the decision include Saleh al Abdullah, commander of the 16th Brigade affiliated with the Russian forces' command in Syria since 2020; Muhammad Issam Shammout, owner and chairman of the board of director of the 'Cham Wings' airline and head of the Shammout Group, who's also active in the automotive, steel, aviation, freight forwarding, construction, and real estate sectors; Ahmad Khalil and Nasser Deeb, co-owners of Sanad Protection and Security Services,¹ which is also included in the list of sanctioned entities due to its role in supporting the Syrian regime economically and recruiting mercenaries to fight alongside Russian forces in Libya and Ukraine.

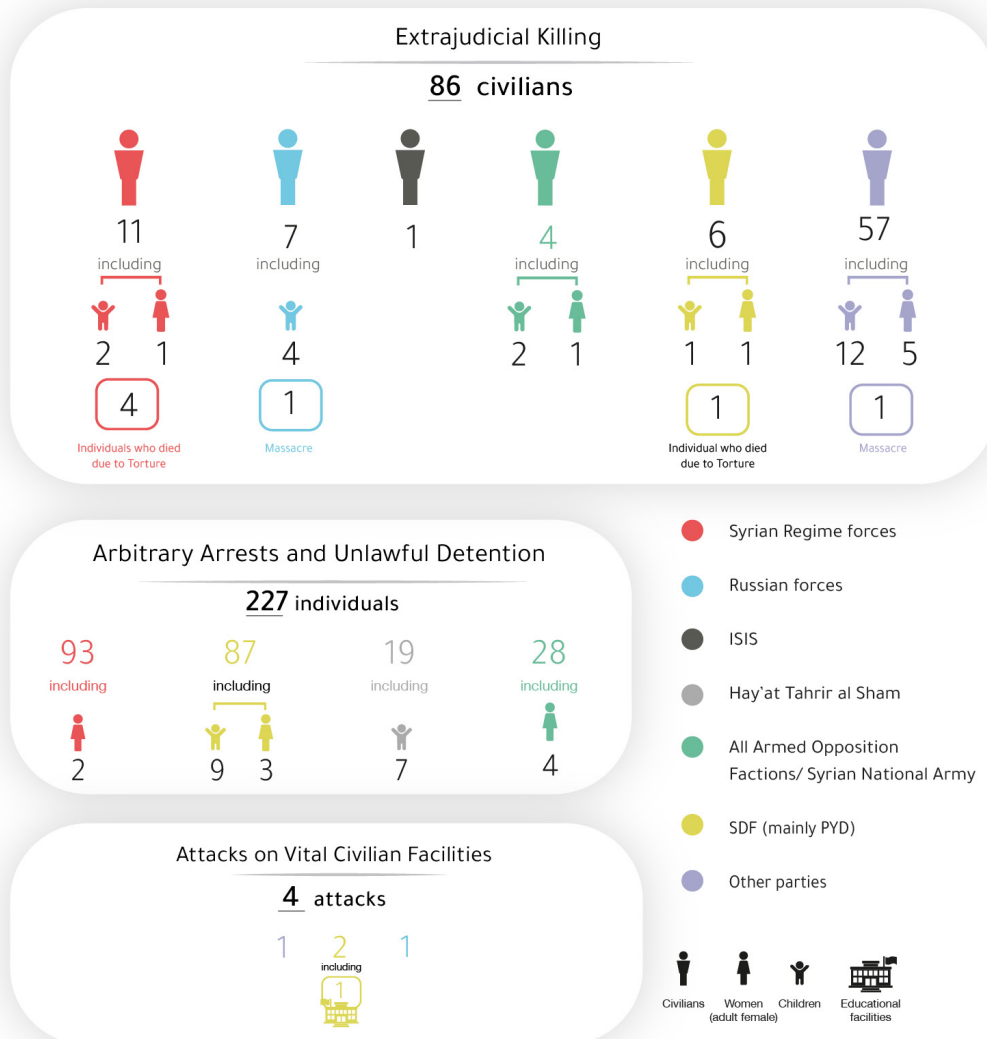
On July 26, [the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office issued a press release](#) in which it revealed that it had added 9 Syrian individuals, including officers of the Syrian regime forces and businessmen linked to the Syrian regime, in addition to two entities (security and guard companies) to the United Kingdom's sanctions list within the package of sanctions imposed by the United Kingdom regarding the situation in Syria and Ukraine. The list includes Saleh al Abdullah, commander of the 16th Brigade of the Syrian regime forces, for his leadership role with the Syrian regime forces and his role in the suppression of the civilian population in Syria; Ahmad Khalil and Nasser Deeb, co-owners of Sanad Protection and Security Services, which was also included in the sanctions list; Issam Shammout, owner and chairman of the board of director of the 'Cham Wings' airline and head of the Shammout Group, with all these individuals sanctioned for their financial support to the Syrian regime through the business they carry out, while the remaining five individuals and the second entity were included in the list "for their participation and support for policies and actions that undermine and threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine." These sanctions include asset freezes and travel bans.

On July 29, [the US Department of Justice](#) published a statement announcing a sentence of life imprisonment against a Saudi-born Canadian citizen, Muhammad Khalifa, known as Abu Radwan al Kanadi. The statement clarified that Muhammad had held important positions in ISIS since 2013 and continued as such until he was arrested by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Syria in January 2019. The statement added that in addition to serving as a fighter and personally executing two Syrian regime soldiers on behalf of ISIS, Khalifa served as a lead translator in ISIS's propaganda production and was the English-speaking narrator on multiple ISIS videos.

¹ A private Syrian security company, which was established in 2017, is supervised by the Wagner Group in Syria and works in protecting Russian interests (phosphates, gas, and securing oil sites) in Syria, where the exploitation of natural resources provides revenues for the Syrian regime. The company is also active in recruiting Syrian mercenaries in Libya and Ukraine.

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

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in July.



A. Extrajudicial killing:

In July, SNHR documented the deaths of 86 civilians, including 21 children and eight women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of other parties. We also documented the deaths of 5 individuals due to torture, in addition to documenting at least two massacres. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**² 11 civilians, including two children and one woman.
- **Russian forces:** Seven civilians, including four children.
- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'):** One civilian.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:** Four civilians, including two children and one woman.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Six civilians, including one child and one woman.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 57 civilians, including 12 children and five women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines whose source we have been unable to identify: 14 civilians, including six children.
- Gunfire whose source we have been unable to identify: 28 civilians, including two children and one woman.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have been unable to identify: Eight civilians, including four children and one woman.
- Killings by parties we have been unable to identify: Seven civilians, including three women.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In July 2022, SNHR documented at least 227 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 16 children and nine women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian regime forces in the governorates of Damascus, then Damascus Suburbs, followed by Daraa. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in July at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

² We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in reality under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria.

Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

The record of cases of arbitrary arrests was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 93, including two women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 19, including seven children.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:** 28, including four women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 87, including nine children and three women.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

In July 2022, SNHR documented at least four incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, one of which was at the hands of Russian forces and caused a massacre.

Among these attacks, we documented one on an educational facility, and two on IDP camps.

These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Russian forces:** One.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Two.

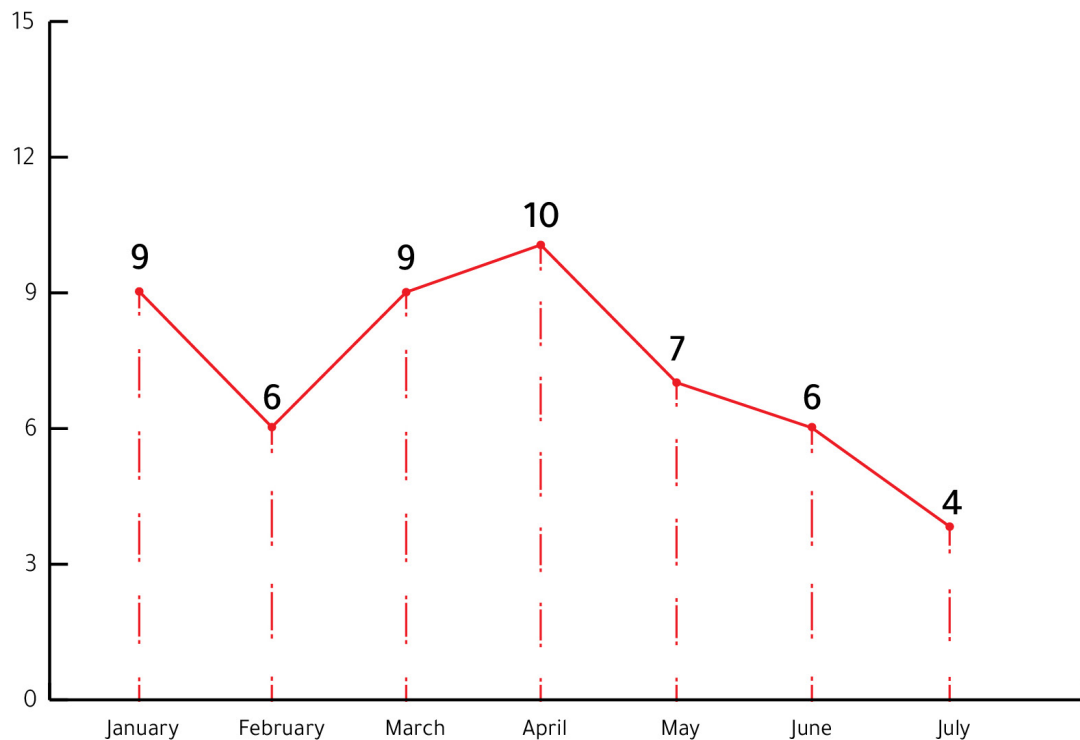
B. Other parties:

Explosions of an unknown cause: One.

The record of attacks on vital civil facilities documented in July 2022 was distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Perpetrator Party Attacked Facility	Russian forces	Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties
			Explosions of an unknown cause
Education Facilities			
Schools		1	
Communal Facilities			
Markets			1
IDP Camps			
IDP camps		1	
IDP shelters	1		
Total	1	2	1

The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented since the start of 2022 up to August of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria has now reached 51 in total, distributed monthly as follows:



The chart shows that the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities in July was the lowest percentage so far this year, with July accounting for 8% of the total record of attacks on vital facilities documented by SNHR since the beginning of 2022, while April accounted for the highest percentage of 20%.

The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in July:

On Tuesday, July 19, 2022, an improvised explosive device from unknown source exploded in [Abbara al Haj Wasfi Market](#); a closed market in Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate. Five civilians were wounded in the explosion, and several fires broke out in shops there, while the market facilities were damaged. SNHR is still trying to reach out to eyewitnesses of the incident for more details. Ras al Ein city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, July 22, 2022, at around 06:50 in the morning fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched an airstrike on an [IDP shelter](#) (previously used as a barn for cattle) in farmlands north of al Jadida village of Jisr al Shoghhour city in Idlib governorate western suburbs. A few minutes later the same warplanes carried out another airstrike, firing two missiles at the same site while civilians and paramedics were working to evacuate the wounded. [The strike caused a massacre, most of whose victims were children, and completely destroyed the IDP shelter.](#) Al Jadida village was under the joint control of Factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident. SNHR will soon issue a detailed report on the incident.



Destruction caused by the double-tap airstrike by Russian forces on an IDP shelter north of al Jadida village in Idlib on July 22, 2022

On Sunday, July 24, 2022, Syrian Democratic Forces used a missile launcher to fire missiles which hit [Kuwait al Rahma Camp for IDPs](#) in Harsh al Khalediya region of al Ahlam Mountain southeast of Afrin city in Aleppo governorate's northern suburbs. The bombardment caused loss of human lives, and [partially damaged several IDP residents and tents' facilities.](#) The region was under the control of the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.



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

The Syrian Network for Human Rights was unable to document any indiscriminate attacks or attacks using outlawed weapons in July 2022.

IV. Attachments

[86 Civilians, Including 21 Children, Eight Women, and Five Victims Who Died Due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria in July 2022](#)

[At Least 227 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in Syria in July 2022, Including 16 Children and Nine Women](#)

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime or Russian forces prior to any attack under the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks lead to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.
- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, caused massive collateral damage that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva IV Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations:

UN Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using the veto, as it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states’ veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians’ lives and to save the Syrian people’s heritage and historical artifacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions and landmines in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other permanent member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced person camps, and to follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League’s plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan’s plan have proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (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 and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to co-operate and provide further evidence and data.
- Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

The United Nations Special Envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.

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

- 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.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army

- The Armed Opposition/Syrian National Army must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian Organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.
- Provide protected facilities and vehicles, such as medical facilities, schools, and ambulances, with distinctive signs that can be distinguished from long distances.

Acknowledgments

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all family members, relatives and friends of the victims, as well as eyewitnesses and local activists whose contributions have enriched this report.



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