



## Russia's Air Force Used Its Double-Tap Airstrike Strategy in Its Latest Attack on al Jadida Village in Idlib Suburbs

**329 Civilians Have Been Killed Between the Start of the 'Ceasefire Agreement' on March 6, 2020, and the End of July 2022**

**Thursday 25 August 2022**

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.

**Content:**

I. The Russian-Syrian Alliance Aerial Bombardment Aims to Destabilize Security and Stability in Areas Outside Its Control .....2

II. Russian Pledges to Cease the Bombing and the Killing of Civilians Are Mere Ink on Paper..... 3

III. Documenting the Airstrike on the Outskirts of al Jadida Village in the Western Suburbs of Idlib, Which Resulted in the Deaths of Seven Civilians, Including Four Children.....5

IV. International and Human Rights Condemnations of al Jadida Massacre .....12

V. Legal Qualification and Recommendations .....12

Annex: Photos and Videos Documenting al Jadida Massacre.....15

## I. The Russian-Syrian Alliance Aerial Bombardment Aims to Destabilize Security and Stability in Areas Outside Its Control

The internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northwestern Syria continue to live in exceptionally severe humanitarian conditions, having been displaced from their homes for years following air and ground bombardment and attacks launched by the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies. Meanwhile, there is no prospect of IDPs being able to return to their homes in light of the complete cessation of the political process and its absolute stagnation for several years. These people also face additional pressure from the Russian threat to use its UN veto power to stop the delivery of UN relief aid to them in the face of efforts to extend the cross-border humanitarian aid delivery mechanism. The Russo-Syrian alliance is not satisfied with inflicting all of the abovementioned suffering but deliberately adds to it with an aerial bombardment that often targets civilian areas and vital facilities with the aim of keeping civilians in areas outside the Syrian regime's control in a state of relentless stress facing constant danger and instability.

### **Report's Methodology:**

This report documents the airstrike launched by a fixed-wing warplane on the outskirts of al Jadida village in the western suburbs of Idlib on July 22, 2022. The report concludes, on the basis of our investigations, that the warplane which carried out the attack was most likely Russian, and that it carried out a double-tap airstrike.

To provide a broader picture of the Syrian regime and its Russian ally's failure to adhere to the latest ceasefire, the report provides the death toll of victims killed at the hands of the Russo-Syrian alliance forces since March 6, 2020, (the date on which the Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement entered into force) until July 23, 2022. The report stresses that these brutal attacks on civilians are frequent, have not ceased, and take place without any accountability or attention.

Through field researchers working with the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), we have obtained direct testimonies from survivors, relatives of victims, aid workers, and media activists, supported by information from the extensive network of contacts we have built up through our eleven years of work. We also rely on accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with witnesses or survivors, none of which are cited from any open sources, with this report providing four of these testimonies. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without us offering or providing them with any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, as well as providing assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias. All of this is in accordance with our internal protocols, which we have worked under for years, and we always strive to develop these to keep pace with the best levels of psychological care for victims.

As in all such reports, SNHR also analyzed the relevant videos and photographs posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. Videos posted by activists show, amongst other things, sites of attacks, the bodies of the victims and the injured, and the extent of the significant destruction resulting from these attacks.

Furthermore, we retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in this report on a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies. We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions, and persecution by Syrian regime forces and some other armed groups. Readers are welcome to find out more about SNHR's [methodology](#).

The investigations detailed in this report have proved conclusively that the targeted locations were civilian areas where no military bases or armories for factions of the Armed Opposition or extremist Islamist groups were situated before or during the attack. Also, Syrian regime forces failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks, despite such warnings being required under international humanitarian law.

The information contained in this report only represents the bare minimum that we have been able to document, and of the severity and magnitude of the violation that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

## II. Russian Pledges to Cease the Bombing and the Killing of Civilians Are Mere Ink on Paper

On July 19, 2022, the Tehran summit, which brought together the presidents of the guarantor states of the Astana Talks, was held in the Iranian capital, during which the three leaders reviewed in detail the situation in the Idlib de-escalation area, according to the final statement published by the [Russian presidential website](#), and stressed “the necessity to maintain calm on the ground by fully implementing all agreements on Idlib.” The agreement added that the leaders “agreed to make further efforts to ensure sustainable normalization of the situation in and around the Idlib de-escalation area, including the humanitarian situation.”

The massacre documented in the report took place only three days after this meeting, which confirms what we at the SNHR have repeatedly stated, namely that there are no guarantees or pressures that can stop Russia or the Syrian regime from launching deliberate and deadly attacks aimed at killing civilians. Rather, these attacks have become lethal Russian 'messages', in which the Syrians, who have become hostages, are paying the price of regional and international inconsistencies. We have documented the Russian and Syrian forces' violation of [the ceasefire agreement reached on March 6, 2020](#), hundreds of times since then, and have reviewed some of these violations in [many of the reports](#) we issued.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, the SNHR's Director, says:



This horrific massacre proves once again that the Syrian people are mere hostages, and that their lives are viewed as a bargaining chip. Russia has not committed to any agreement to which it was a party, it is not interested in achieving any political transition, and it is still using the tactic of killing and blackmailing to maintain the current regime, regardless of the cost in terms of the losses of the Syrian people and the state.



According to the SNHR's database, attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces on northwest Syria have resulted in the deaths of 329 civilians, including 114 children and 50 women (adult female), between March 6, 2020, and July 23, 2022, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**<sup>1</sup> 233, including 75 children and 34 women.
- **Russian forces:** 96, including 39 children and 16 women.

We also documented 12 massacres perpetrated during the same period, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** Seven.
- **Russian forces:** Five.

According to the SNHR's Victim Documentation team, the massacres documented during the same period resulted in the deaths of 81 civilians, including 33 children and 14 women. This means that nearly 59 percent of all the victims were women and children, a very high proportion, and a clear indication that civilian residents have been the specific targets in most of these massacres.

<sup>1</sup> We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is that of 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 turn 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, with the security branches, along with the president who rules over them, being the true power and the governing regime in Syria.

The death toll resulting from the massacres was distributed according to the perpetrators as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 52 civilians, including 18 children and 11 women.
- **Russian forces:** 29 civilians, including 15 children and three women.

### III. Documenting the Airstrike on the Outskirts of al Jadida Village in the Western Suburbs of Idlib, Which Resulted in the Deaths of Seven Civilians, Including Four Children

Al Jadida village, known as Jdaidet al Jisr, is located in the northern suburbs of Jisr al Shoghour in western Idlib, which is administratively a part of al Janoudiya district. Al Jadidia, one of a group of adjacent villages, the majority of whose residents are Christians, is located about three km (line of sight) from the Syrian-Turkish border.

The Armed Opposition factions took control of the village at the end of 2012; at the end of 2014, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham tightened its control over the entire area, with most of the village's residents leaving their homes. The village is still under the joint control of the opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham as of the time of preparing this report.

The village had not witnessed any bombing operations since January 1, 2022, when fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched airstrikes on the outskirts of the village, without any casualties being documented as a result.

At around dawn on Friday, July 22, 2022, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian Su34s, carried out four raids (two double-tap airstrikes) on two locations on the outskirts of al Jadida village. The raids resulted in the deaths of seven civilians, including four sibling children, (three females and one male). The following is what we were able to document about the details of the Russian airstrikes on the two locations:

### The first location:

At around 5:50, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched an air raid, firing a missile that landed near the eastern-facing front side of an IDP shelter - a former livestock breeding building - located approximately 350 meters north of al Jadida village, which was being used to house the families of three brothers from the Mathan family, displaced from Zayzoun village in the western suburbs of Hama. About ten minutes later, after civilians gathered to help the injured and retrieve those trapped from under the rubble of the building, the same Russian warplanes launched a second air raid, firing two missiles that fell about 25 meters from the impact site of the first missile (one of them fell on the road leading to the shelter). The attack resulted in the deaths of six civilians, including four children, and caused the collapse of the shelter building. This attack constitutes a massacre of civilians.



### The names of the victims on the first site:

- 1- [The 8-year-old girl Ikhlas Ayham Mathan](#), from al Ziadiya village in Idlib suburbs.
- 2- [The 6-year-old girl, Yusra Ayham Mathan](#), [from al Ziadiya village in Idlib suburbs](#).
- 3- [The 4-year-old girl, Jana Ayham Mathan](#), from al Ziadiya village in Idlib suburbs.
- 4- [The 11-month-old infant, Muhammad Ayham Mathan](#), [from al Ziadiya village in Idlib suburbs](#).



The bodies of the four children inside the ambulance

5- Ahmad Alwan, from Bashlamoon village in Idlib suburbs, came to the site after the first raid.

6- Muhammad Fajr Abdul Hai, from Jannat al Qura village in Idlib suburbs, came to the site after the first raid.

The attack on this site also injured 13 other civilians, including the parents of the child victims.

SNHR spoke with Jihad Mathan<sup>2</sup>, the uncle of the child victims and one of the survivors of the attack, from al Ziadiya village in Idlib western suburbs, originally from Zayzoun village in the western suburbs of Hama, from where he was displaced along with his family about six years ago, when they came to al Jadida village where they were living in a formerly abandoned barn building<sup>3</sup> (known to the people of the area as a poultry farm) on the southern outskirts of al Jadida village, which he and his family had rehabilitated. Jihad told us: **“My brother Ayham and I shared the building where he lived with his family in the eastern part of it and I lived in the western part. Later, my third brother, Rif’at, built two rooms with an insulating roof on the top of this building and lived in it with his family. On July 22, while we were sleeping, ‘our house’ was bombed by a missile. Because of the severity of its impact, I felt a violent shaking and found my feet under the stones, but I immediately got up and took out my two daughters who were next to me, then pulled my two sons from under the ceiling of their room and took them to the hospital.**

<sup>2</sup> Via WhatsApp on July 27, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Its dimensions are approximately 12 x 8 meters

My brother Ayham, who was thrown out of his bed by the first airstrike, was searching for his children stuck under the destroyed roof of the building. The missile fell in front of the entrance to his house, which was largely destroyed. Before they were retrieved, the warplanes returned and launched another raid with two missiles in a location very close to the first site. One of the missiles caused a big crater in the road in front of our house, while the second missile fell about 3 meters from the impact site of the first missile. Two young men who were at the site working to help the injured were killed and my mother was injured in the second raid.”

Jihad added that the Civil Defense personnel started the operations to pull the children out from the rubble after the second raid, but the children died.



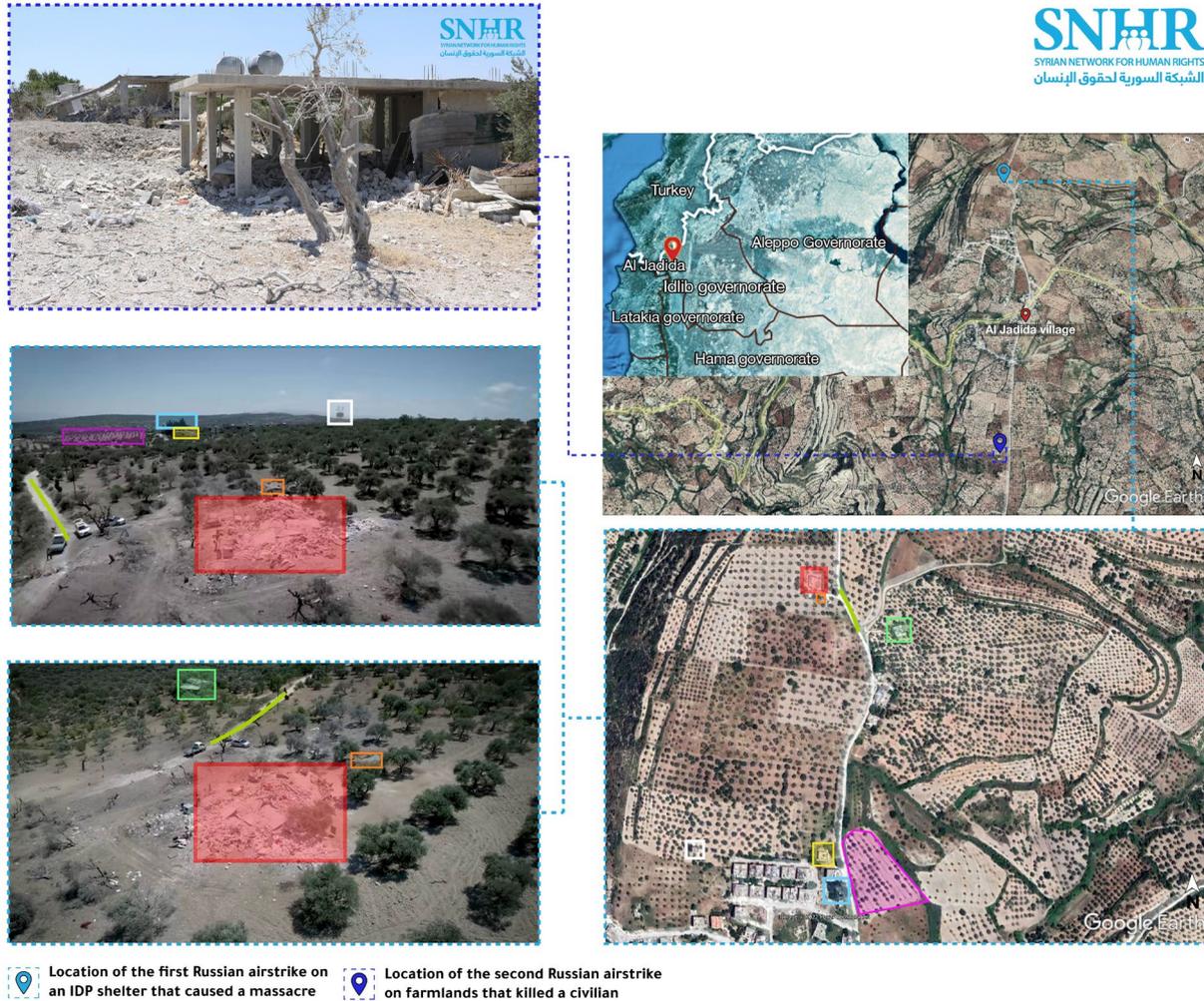
**The second location:**

Approximately 15 minutes after the Russian airstrike on the first location, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were also Russian, launched two successive raids, about ten minutes apart, each with two missiles, on two neighboring houses south of al Jadida village (about 550 meters away by line of sight) located on the edge of al Jadida- Al Janoudiya road. This attack resulted in the death of a civilian who was riding a motorcycle along the main road, and caused massive damage to the two houses.

**The victim's name:**

Khaldoun Khattab, from al Janoudiya village.

## Visual guide shows the locations of Russian airstrikes on al Jadida village in Idlib governorate on July 22, 2022



SNHR spoke with Dureid Haj Hamoud<sup>4</sup>, a Civil Defense rescue worker, who went to the site of the first attack. He told us: **“When I arrived at the place, the Civil Defense personnel had finished evacuating the victims and the injured, and I saw great destruction at the site and a large crater on the road leading - to the east of - to the ‘poultry farm’.”**

Dureid told us that he then went to al Qnayya Hospital, where he saw the bodies of the four children and an adult body placed in a bag, in addition to six surviving children who’d sustained various injuries. He added, **“I went to the site of the second attack, where I saw great destruction at the site, south of al Jadida village, near al Jadida-Al Janoudiya road, where I saw two large craters that caused massive damage to the two houses at the targeted site.”**

<sup>4</sup> Via WhatsApp on July 26, 2022.

SNHR spoke with another witness, Hasan Ahmad Jamal Daoud<sup>5</sup>, from Jabal al Zaweya, currently displaced to al Jadida village, who told us:

**“At around 6:00 am on July 22nd, a Russian warplane fired a missile at a residential house. I felt the missile the moment it fell and took a photo of it from where I was, then I followed four of my friends to the site in order to rescue the wounded. When they approached the site - they were about 20 meters away - the same warplane launched another airstrike on the previously targeted site with two missiles, killing one of my friends, Fajr, instantly, and wounding the remaining three, whom I helped transfer to the ambulance, while I escaped injury because I was about 25 meters behind them. I was one of the first to arrive at Abu Ref’at’s house, and I contributed with other civilians to transporting the wounded from the site. Meanwhile, the Russian warplanes launched two other successive airstrikes, about ten minutes apart, on another site near al Jadida.”** Ahmad added, **“I saw the warplane and was able to distinguish it clearly from the mechanism for carrying out the airstrike.”**



A video of the victim, Muhammad Fajr Abdul Hai, taken by the witness, Hasan Daoud

We also spoke with Muhammad Najib al Jawhar<sup>6</sup>, another Civil Defense rescue worker, who recalled what happened in the attack, saying: **“I woke up to the shaking caused by the first missile’s fall, and from where I was I could see the smoke from the bombing, which I learned from my colleague was the second raid on the same location. At that time, the observatories were reporting on a Russian warplane flying over the area, which had carried out two raids in a different location.”**

Muhammad added that he went with the Civil Defense team to the first site, where they began to retrieve the three girls. In the meantime, a mutilated body was found hanging in the olive trees, which later turned out to be the victim Ahmad Alwan, who had gone to the site after the first missile to try to help. Muhammad later went to al Qnayya Hospital, where the victims and injured were taken. He recalled: **“I was able to see seven injured children in the emergency rooms, and there were injured people inside the operating rooms, and others were transferred to Darkoush Hospital.”**

<sup>5</sup> Via WhatsApp on July 22, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Via WhatsApp on July 26, 2022.

## IV. International and Human Rights Condemnations of al Jadida Massacre

On July 22, Mr. Mark Cutts, UN Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, posted a [tweet](#) on his official Twitter account, in which he condemned the attack in which seven civilians, including four children from one family, were killed. The UK Embassy in Damascus expressed its displeasure at news of more innocent lives lost in Idlib, in a [tweet](#) on its official Twitter account, and called for all perpetrators to be held to account for their crimes.

On July 22, [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 agencies, to take urgent measures to ensure the protection of civilians in northwest Syria from the indiscriminate airstrikes by Russian warplanes. The statement added that "the act may amount to a war crime, as the planes appeared to randomly target densely populated residential neighbourhoods inhabited by displaced people from the countryside of Hama Governorate." The statement further noted 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.

On July 23, UNICEF published a [statement](#) in which it said that at least five children had been killed and nine injured in the west of Idlib. The organization added that "this is a devastating reminder that the war on children is not over. Children in the northwest of Syria and across the country keep paying the heaviest price of the ongoing violence." The statement indicated that in 2021, 70 percent of grave violations recorded against children in Syria occurred in the northwest.

## V. Legal Qualification and Recommendations

- Syrian and Russian forces have violated several rules of International Humanitarian Law, primarily by failing to discriminate between civilians and combatants or between civilian and military targets, instead bombing hospitals, schools, civilian centers and neighborhoods, with these violations amounting to war crimes.
- International Humanitarian Law emphasizes the need to show respect for civilian objects, assigning for them a special protection status, and classifying the targeting of these facilities as a war crime; Article 52 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions defines Civilian Objects as: "....all objects which are not military objectives" while Military Objects are categorized as: "those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage." Civilian objects include medical facilities, educational facilities, infrastructure facilities, places of worship, and other facilities used for civilian purposes.

- The Syrian-Russian alliance forces have violated the de-escalation zone agreement in all regions, including the Idlib region.
- Syrian regime forces have explicitly violated the Sochi Agreement by carrying out bombardment of a number of villages and towns in the fourth de-escalation zone, mostly in the demilitarized zone, the eastern suburbs of Hama and the southeastern suburbs of Idlib. These attacks have resulted in civilian casualties.
- The Syrian and Russian regimes' forces have undoubtedly violated UN Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which demanded the cessation of indiscriminate attacks, as well as violating a wide range of customary International Humanitarian Law rules, and also violating articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute by committing intentional homicide, all of which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- The incidents of bombardment have incidentally caused civilian casualties, including injuries, as well as causing significant damage to civilian objects. There are very strong indications suggesting that the damage was extremely excessive in comparison to the intended military benefit, with the attacks failing to discriminate between civilians and combatants in most cases. Also, it seems that some of the attacks appear to have deliberately targeted vital facilities and civilian areas.
- The report issued by the delegates to the 2005 Summit states unanimously that each country has a responsibility to protect its population from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from egregious crimes, or itself is committing such crimes as in the case of the Syrian regime, means that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner.

### **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 Security Council must pass a resolution to stabilize the ceasefire in Idlib and include punitive measures for all violators of the ceasefire.
- The Security Council must provide genuine support for serious implementation of the peace process in Syria and for achieving a just political transition that guarantees security and stability.
- The Syrian issue must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those involved must be held accountable, including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been repeatedly proven.
- The Security Council must ensure the establishment of peace and security and the implementation of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) civilians and save Syrians' lives, heritage, and cultural artifacts from destruction, pillage, and vandalism.

### **The UN Secretary-General**

- Should condemn this brutal massacre in the strongest terms and should not ignore the premeditated killing of Syrian citizens.
- Should clearly identify perpetrators of violations, thus contributing to condemning their actions, disclosing their practices, and sending a message of solidarity to the affected communities. Ignoring any mention of the perpetrators of apparent violations simply encourages them to commit more violations and to repeat them.
- Should request that the Security Council take urgent action and hold an emergency meeting to ensure a ceasefire and to protect tens of thousands of displaced civilians.

### **International community**

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its complete ineffectiveness, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that can protect them from the daily killings and siege and increase support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be applied in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- The SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) principle in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P) after exhausting all political channels from the Arab League's plan, and after Mr. Kofi Annan's plan proved fruitless. Therefore, the steps recommended under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations should be adopted and 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 situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work to ensure justice and achieve accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to implement the principle of universal jurisdiction.
- The countries that support the parties to the conflict in Syria, especially Russia, must put pressure on their allies on the ground to ensure the neutrality of the Idlib area from combat operations, and protect the lives of at least three million people living there.

### **UN General Assembly**

- Must attribute full responsibility to the Russian and Syrian regimes for this massacre, and put pressure on the Security Council to act to protect Syrian civilians and to prevent Russia from enjoying impunity as a member of the Security Council.

### **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

- The OHCHR should condemn this massacre, and submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations concerning the massacre.

### Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Work on documenting this massacre, include it in the upcoming report, and clearly identify the perpetrators.

### UN Envoy for Syria

- Condemn this massacre and declare that the massacres, killings, and torture have destroyed the peace process.

### Russian forces

- Stop committing all types of war crimes in Syria.
- Reconstruct what was destroyed by the Russian war machine.
- Compensate victims financially and morally, and apologize publicly.
- Commit to compliance with the outcome of the Sochi Summit and not repeat the scenario of violations we have seen in the agreements of de-escalation zone.
- Stop supporting the war crimes and crimes against humanity which the Syrian regime has been committing for 11 years, with the current support being categorized as direct involvement in these crimes.

### The Syrian regime

- Stop killing Syrian citizens and abide by the Syrian constitution.
- Adhere to the rules of customary humanitarian law and stop committing war crimes.

## Annex: Photos and Videos Documenting al Jadida Massacre

[Exclusive photos showing](#) the bodies of sibling child victims killed in a Russian double-tap airstrike on an IDP shelter north of al Jadida village.



[Exclusive photos showing](#) the destruction of an IDP shelter caused by a Russian double-tap airstrike north of al Jadida village, [which killed six civilians, including four children.](#)



Exclusive photos showing a missile impact site left by a Russian double-tap airstrike on a dirt road in front of an IDP shelter in agricultural land north of al Jadida village.



[Exclusive photos showing](#) the effects of a Russian double-tap airstrike on sites in agricultural [land](#) south of al Jadida village, [which killed one civilian.](#)



[A video of the evacuation and retrieval of victims from under the rubble left by a Russian double-tap airstrike on sites in agricultural land north of al Jadida village, which killed six civilians, including four children.](#)

Videos showing the destruction inflicted on an IDP shelter by a Russian double-tap airstrike on sites in agricultural land north of al Jadida village, which killed six civilians, including four children.



[A video showing the bodies of four sibling children who were victims of the massacre inflicted by a Russian double-tap airstrike on an IDP shelter north of al Jadida village, and their families bidding farewell to them.](#)

### Thanks and Condolences

Our sincere thanks and condolences to all the local people and activists whose contributions have greatly and effectively contributed to and enriched this report.



[www.snhr.org](http://www.snhr.org) - [info@snhr.org](mailto:info@snhr.org)