

12th Annual Report

Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2022

Normalizing Relationships with the Syrian Regime is a Blatant Violation of the Rights of Millions of Syrians



Tuesday , January 17, 2023

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

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I. Introduction

This report provides a summary of the most notable violations of human rights that took place in Syria in the year 2022, as documented by SNHR's team. This will be the 12th annual report released by SNHR in the years since the popular uprising began in the March 2011. Over the course of the past year, we have recorded a multitude of violations perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria. Indeed, it is safe to state, as this report shows, that many of these patterns still persist, and that the Syrian regime is still the main perpetrator of many of those violations far ahead of all the other parties.

While 2022 did see a reduction in the rates of violations perpetrated, the escalating impact of those violations over the past 12 years has made for a catastrophic state of human rights in Syria. Violations of human rights include, inter alia, killing, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance, forced displacement, seizure of lands and properties, and the rampant security instability that have provided a ripe environment for many assassinations and bombings. Due to these violations, which threaten the very core of the rights and dignity of the human being, with no end in sight or any concrete means of holding the perpetrator accountable yet available, hundreds of thousands of Syrians continue to sell up their properties, flee their lands and seek asylum around the world. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Syrians now in exile will not even consider returning to Syria in the current conditions, while even those who remain in Syria are looking for a way out, due to the fact that Syria has become an uninhabitable country with no regard for even the most basic human rights; this in turn has had its toll on the economy which has plummeted to even worse depths compared only to last year. Syria has been rated as one of the world's worst countries with regard to many basic human rights.

The root of the problem in Syria is despotism and the refusal of any democratic transition of power outside the Assad family which has ruled Syria for half a century. Even other de facto authorities reject any local form of democracy. Bringing about an end to the human rights violations in Syria, especially widespread and systematic ones, cannot be achieved without bringing about a political resolution. This requires the engagement of all the parties to the conflict and their backer states in achieving a political transition.

Ultimately, the responsibility falls upon the international community and UN Security Council, who should show far greater concern for the unimaginable suffering of millions of Syrians rather than the disheartening disregard for Syria they show at present.

The political process reaching a dead end in Geneva has given rise to other attempted steps in the political arena that involve reviving relations with the Syrian regime without taking into account its status as a perpetrator of and partner in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian state and the Syrian people. Any states working to restore relations with the Syrian regime are giving their backing and support to a regime that continues to this day to commit crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, and, thus, are partner in those crimes. Future Syrian governments and local and international human rights groups must expose these blatant violations of international law.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, says:

Normalizing relationships with the Syrian regime is an affront to the state that comes to such a decision, and even before that to the millions of Syrian victims, especially those killed by various types of weapons, including chemical weapons, and those who've died due to torture. Normalizing relationships with the Syrian regime is also a violation of international law since, in doing so, a state would be supporting a regime that committed and is committing crimes against humanity against its people. All states attempting to revive relations with the Syrian regime and all the world's nations should instead work to help achieve a political transition in Syria in 2023. This alone would put an end to innumerable violations and ensure the return of thousands of refugees, as well as ending the outflow of people fleeing Syria.

Background

Founded in June 2011, three months after the beginning of the popular uprising, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is an independent human rights organization which monitors and documents human rights violations in Syria, mobilizing our efforts and capabilities towards limiting them, contributing to the protection of the victims' rights, exposing the perpetrators of violations in preparation for holding them accountable, raising awareness amongst Syrians of their civil and political rights, promoting the optimal conditions for human rights, advancing transitional justice, supporting democratic change, achieving justice and peace in Syria, and cataloging and archiving the history of events. Based on these objectives, the SNHR archives the violations' incidents it documents within an extensive database, issuing reports and studies based on the material gathered there.

SNHR is [a member](#) of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P), the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the International Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the Every Casualty Worldwide (ECW), a founding member of the Global Alliance on War, Conflict & Health, and a member of the [Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition \(CWCC\)](#)

It should also be noted that the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) has relied on the Syrian Network for Human Rights as a primary source in all of its statistics on the analysis of victims of the conflict in Syria; SNHR also works in cooperation with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) and has signed a data-sharing agreement with the Independent International and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other UN bodies, as well as with international organizations such as the [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Amnesty International. The SNHR is one of the most important data sources [for the Syria situation reports issued by the foreign ministries of many countries worldwide](#), with a large number of Arab and international news agencies relying on the SNHR's reports and statistics for their [coverage](#) and reports on Syria.

In 2022, SNHR continued its work, issuing approximately 74 reports and nearly 869 news bulletins, in which it addressed multiple types of the most notable human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, such as extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, forced displacement, and the use of prohibited munitions and other highly destructive munitions, and other violations. These reports were based on evidence from numerous sources, including approximately 195 testimonies of victims who have been subjected to various types of violations, injured or survivors of the attacks, paramedics, central signal workers or victims' families. All these testimonies were obtained through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, with none of them cited from any second-hand sources. All these procedures are carried out under SNHR's internal protocols, which we have worked for years to perfect, and which we strive constantly to develop through our experience in order to keep pace with the highest standards of care and reliability, in addition to hundreds of photos, videos and other open sources of information. Readers can study our working methodology more extensively at [this link](#).

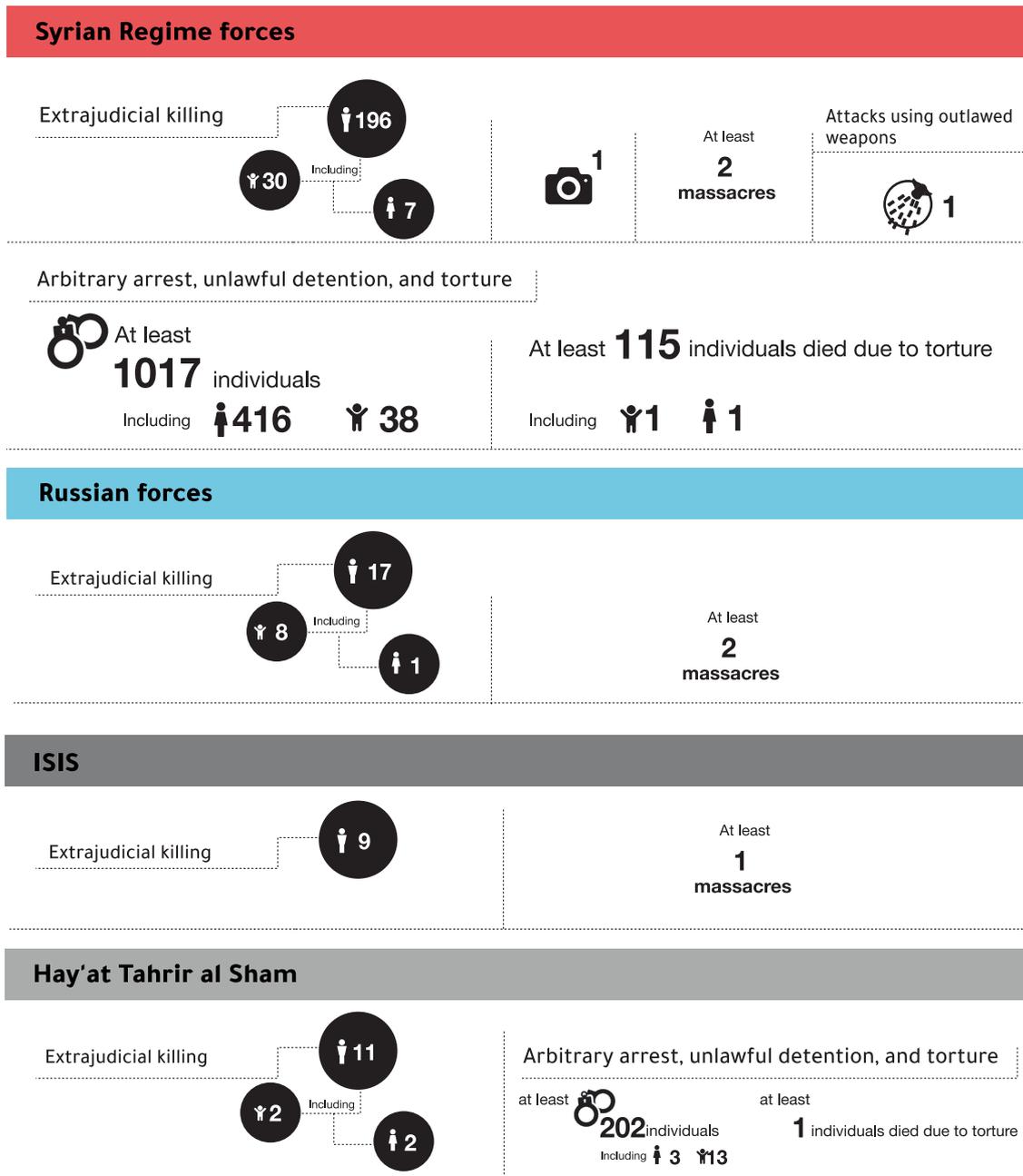
In this report, we provide a record of the most notable violations perpetrated in 2022, together with brief details of some of these violations, many of which we have referred to in the reports we released over the past year, in order to ensure that the report is of a manageable length. Additionally, the report includes detailed information on political, human rights-related and military events that occurred in 2022 to provide a clearer picture of the context of the events during which the violations occurred. We also emphasize that the legal framework we use to assess the Syrian situation are international humanitarian law and customary international law, along with international human rights law, in addition to referring, within a narrow scope and a limited number of cases, to the Syrian regime's violation of the Syrian Constitution and the local laws established in its name.

As we emphasize in every report, the information provided in this report represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred which we were able to document, given the exceptional difficulties and challenges that we have faced during our work as shown in the methodology. Also, it does not include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. Most Notable Violations of Human Rights in Syria in 2022 According to SNHR's Database

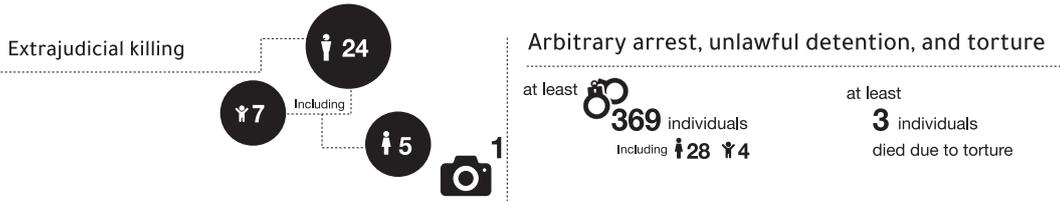
This report covers the most notable violations of human rights by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria between January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023.

The graph below shows the most notable violations of human rights in Syria in 2022:¹

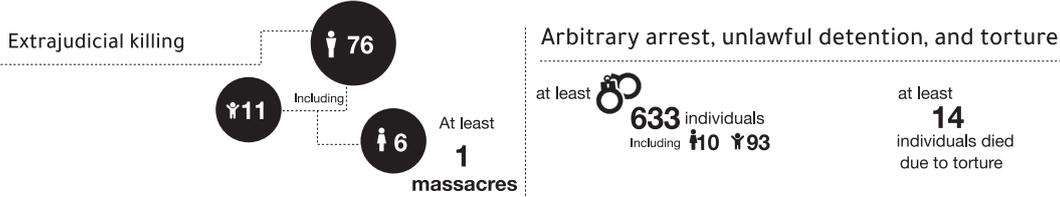


1. [Infographic showing the most notable violations of human rights by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2022](#)

All Armed Opposition Factions/ Syrian National Army



SDF (mainly PYD)



Other parties



At least **75,000** persons were forcibly displaced due to military operations of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces, **11,000** of them due to the Syrian-Russian .Alliance forces military operations

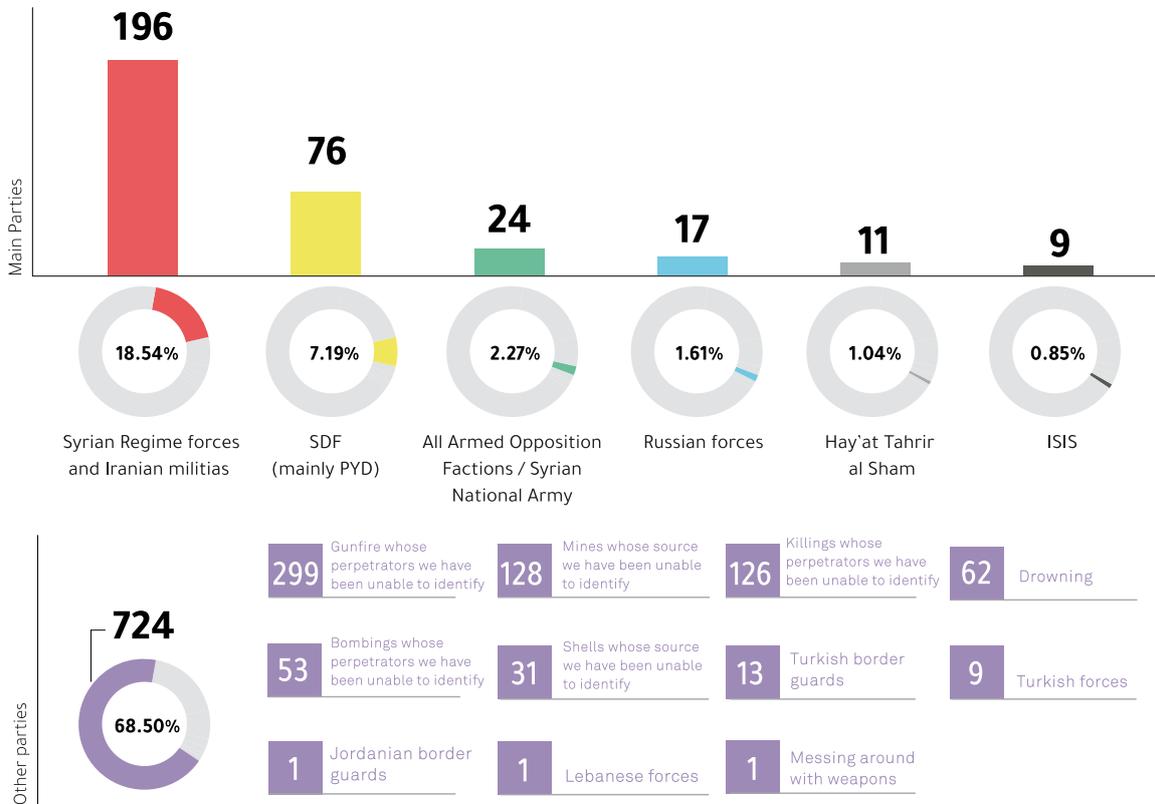
-  civilians
-  women (adult female)
-  children
-  Medical personnel
-  Media workers
-  Arrest
-  Cluster Munitions

January 2023
As documented by SNHR

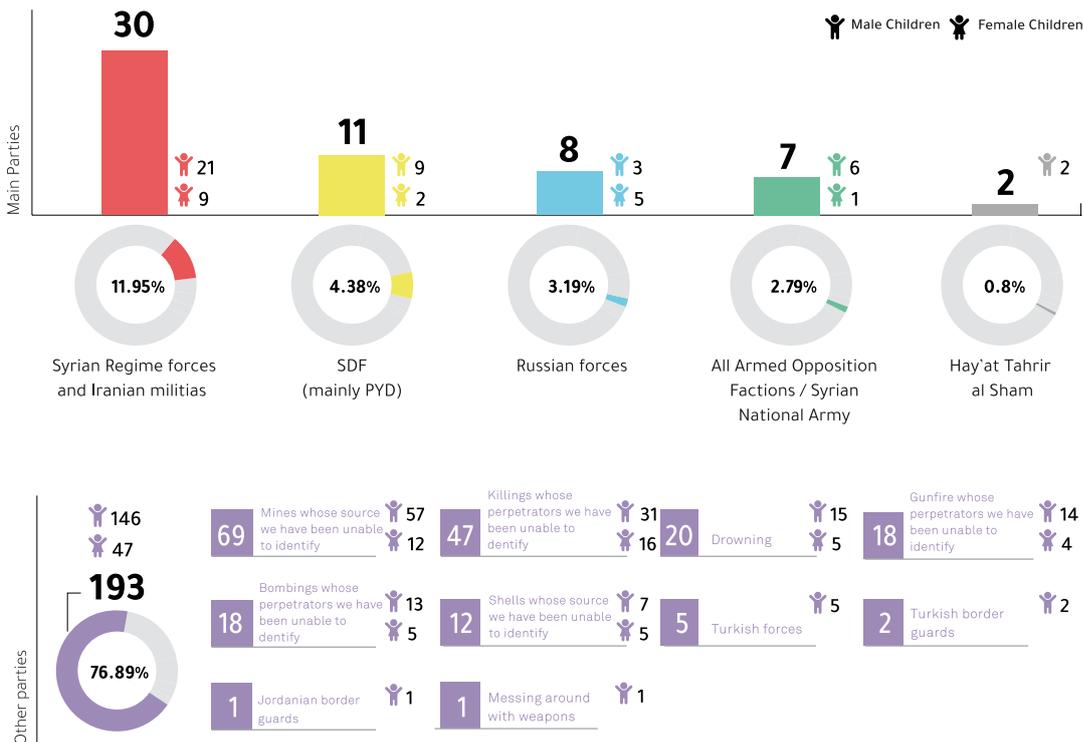
A. Extrajudicial killing

In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of 1,057 civilians, including 251 children and 78 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, distributed as follows:

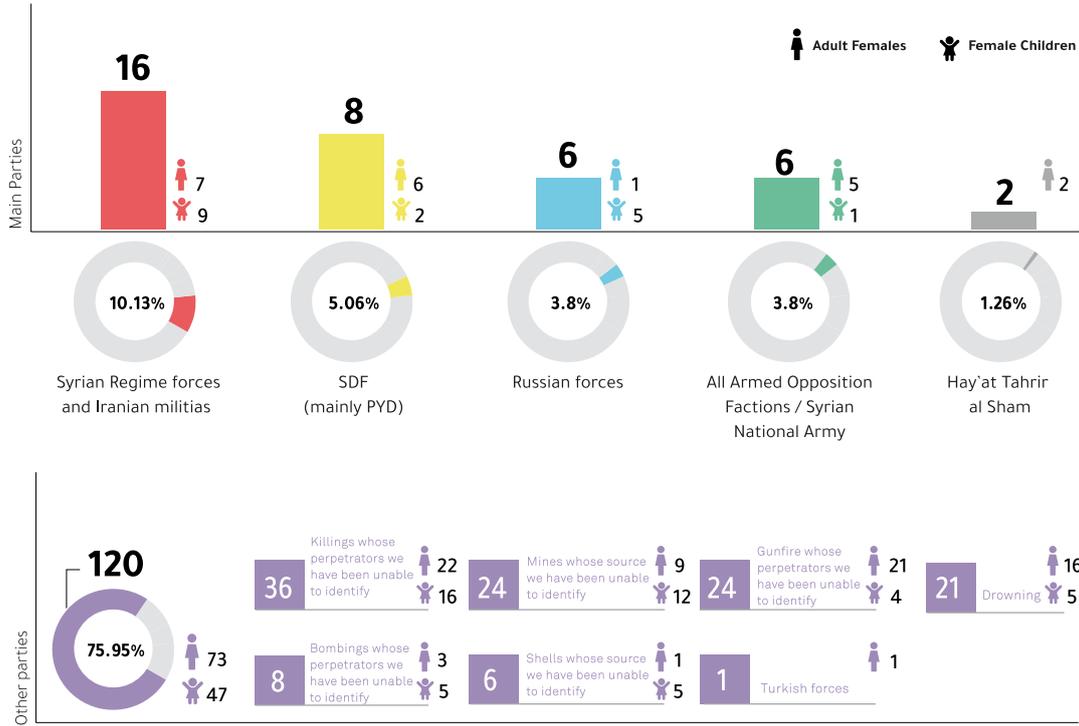
1,057 civilians killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, in 2022



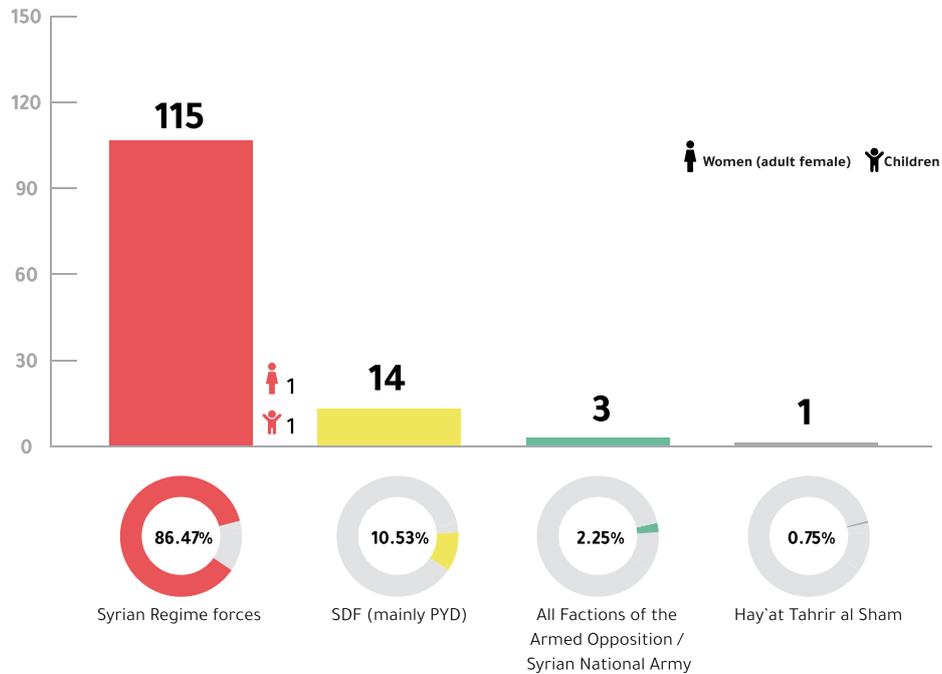
251 children killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, in 2022



158 females killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, in 2022



133 individuals died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, in 2022



1. Main parties

- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias):**² we documented the killing of 196 civilians at the hands of Syrian regime forces, including 30 children and seven women (adult female).
- **Russian forces:** 17 civilians, including eight children and one woman.
- **ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State):** nine civilians.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):**³ 11 civilians, including two children and two women.
- **All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA):**⁴ 24 civilians, including seven children and five women.
- **Kurdish-Led Syrian Democratic Forces/SDF (PYD):** 76 civilians, including 11 children and six women.

2. Other parties

We documented the killing of 724 civilians, including 193 children and 73 women at the hands of other parties, as follows:

- Landmines whose source we have not yet been able to identify: 128 civilians, including 69 children and nine women.
- Shells whose source we have not yet been able to identify: 31 civilians, including 12 children and one woman.
- Gunfire whose source we have not yet been able to identify: 299 civilians, including 18 children and 21 women.
- Killings by parties we have not yet been able to identify: 126 civilians, including 47 children and 22 women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have not yet been able to identify: 53 civilians, including 18 children and three women.
- Turkish Border Guard: 13 civilians, including two children.
- Jordan Border Guard: one child.
- Lebanese forces: one civilian.
- Drowning: 62 civilians, including 20 children and 16 women
- Weapons-tampering: one child.

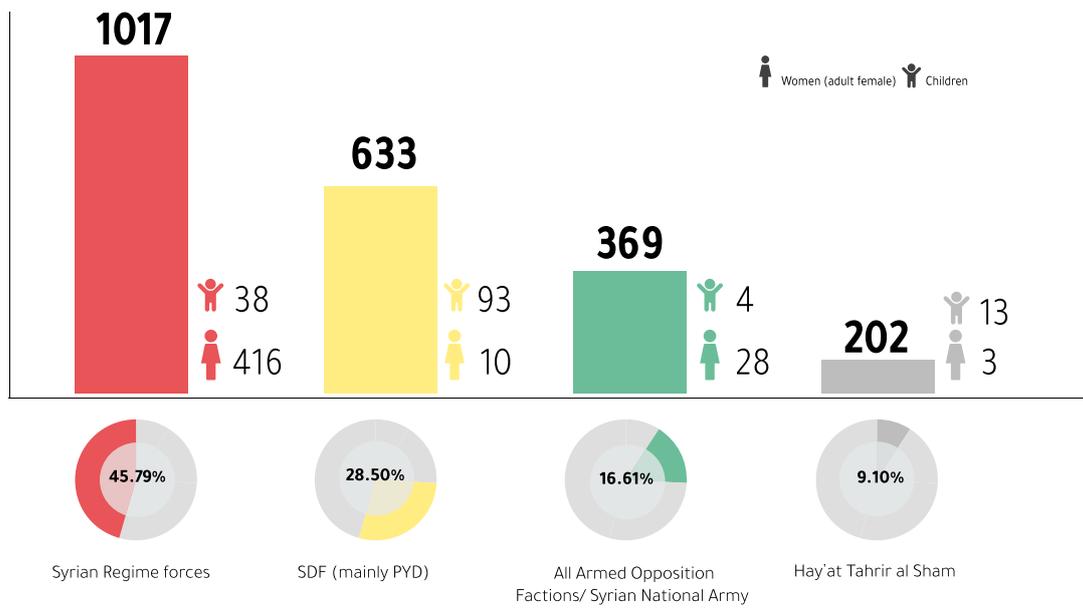
2. We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the state security apparatus. Conversely, 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, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under autocratic/hereditary rule, with no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade merely for show, while the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he supposedly presides, and the Minister of Justice cannot even summon a low-ranking security office, let alone a security branch head. Syria is ruled by the heads of the security branches and the president to whom they are subservient.

3. Designated as a terrorist group by the UN.

4. All armed opposition factions: all the factions that have been founded since 2011 in various neighborhoods and areas across Syria, many of which have since been disbanded, while many others had no centralized command. At the end of 2017, the Syrian National Army (SNA) was founded as an umbrella group for the armed opposition factions that still existed at the time.

B. Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention

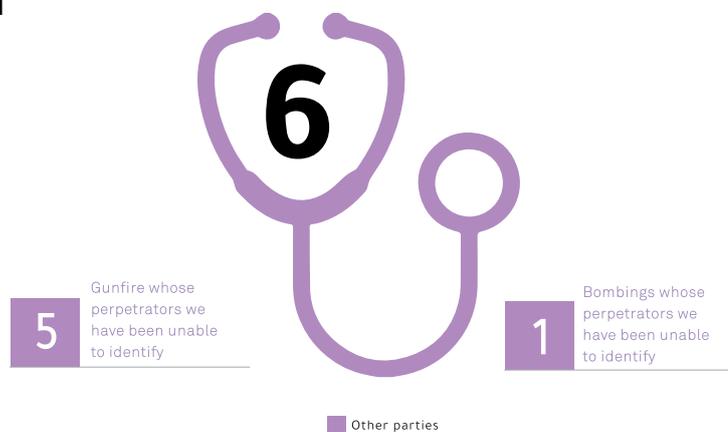
In 2022, SNHR's team documented no fewer than 2,221 cases of arbitrary arrest, including 148 children and 457 women (adult females) at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, as follows:



- **Syrian regime forces:** 1,017 individuals, including 38 children and 416 women.
- **HTS:** 202 individuals, including 13 children and three women.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** 369 individuals, including four children and 28 women.
- **SDF:** 633 individuals, including 93 children and 10 women.

C. Targeting medical personnel

In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of six medical personnel, all at the hands of other parties. Five were killed by gunfire whose source we have not been able to identify, and one in a bombing whose perpetrators we have not yet been able to identify.



D. Targeting media workers

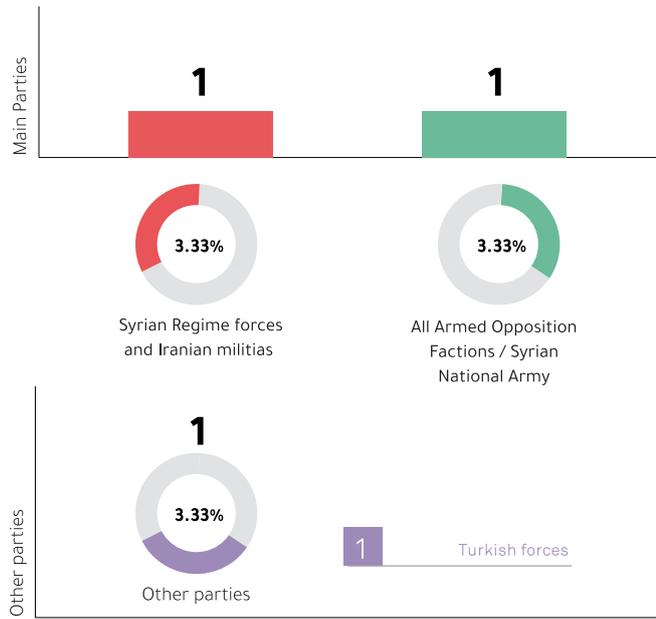
In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of three media workers, as follows:

1. Main parties

- Syrian regime forces: one media worker
- All armed opposition factions/ SNA: one worker

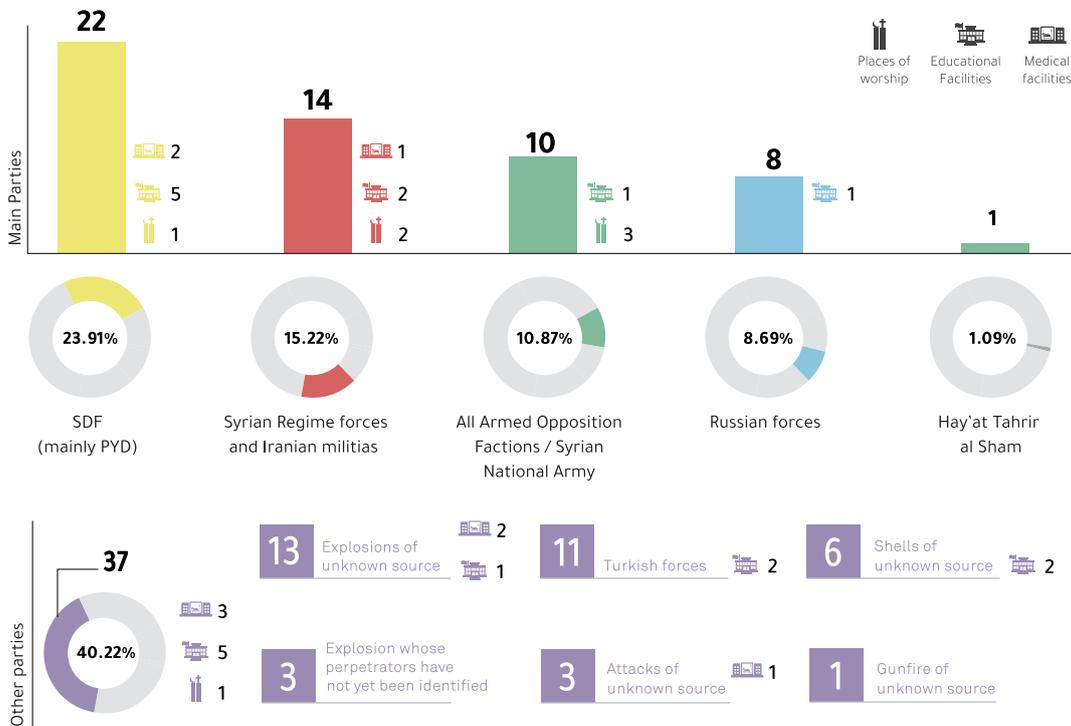
2. Other parties

- Turkish forces: one media worker



E. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

In 2022, SNHR documented no fewer than 92 attacks on vital civilian facilities, distributed according to the parties to the conflict and controlling forces as follows:



1. **Main parties**

- **Syrian regime forces:** 14 attacks.
- **Russian forces:** eight attacks.
- **HTS:** one attack.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** 10 attacks.
- **SDF:** 22 attacks.

2. **Other parties**

- Other parties were responsible for 37 attacks, as follows:
- Explosions whose sources we have not yet been able to identify: 13 attacks.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have not yet been able to identify: three attacks.
- Shells whose sources we have not yet been able to identify: six attacks.
- Attacks whose perpetrators we have not yet been able to identify: three attacks.
- Gunfire whose sources we have not yet been able to identify: one attack.
- Turkish forces: 11 attacks

F. Unlawful attacks

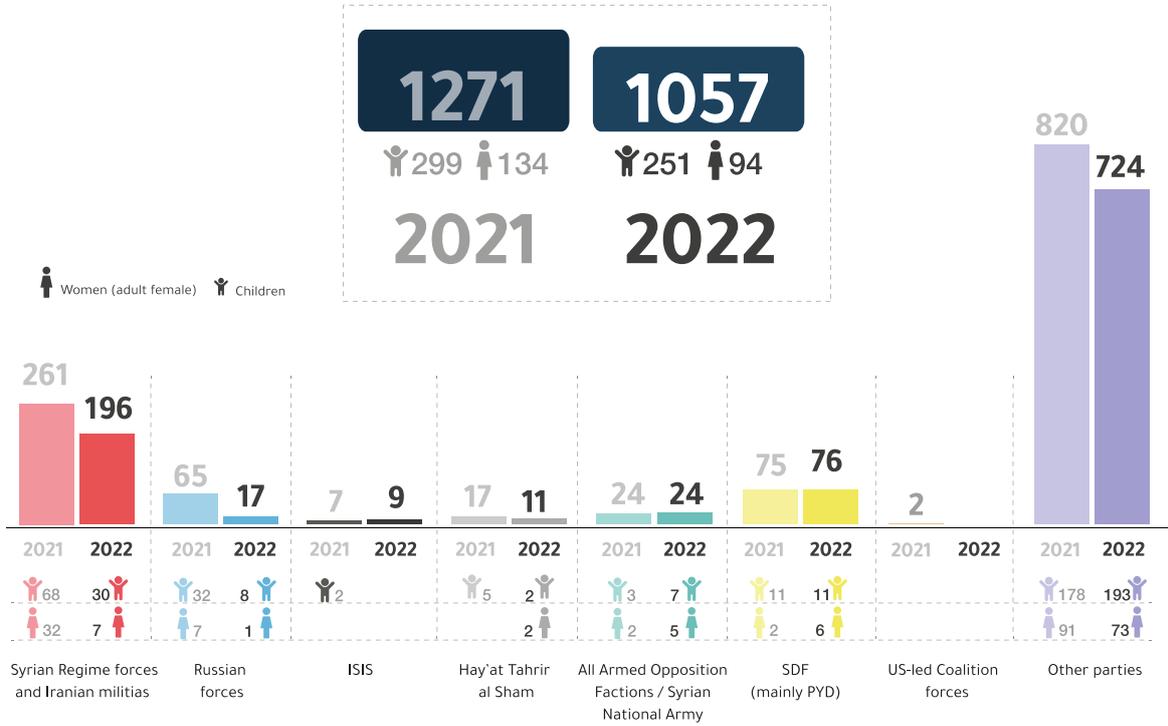
In 2022, SNHR documented one attack involving the use of cluster munitions by Syrian regime forces in Idlib governorate. The attack resulted in the killing of 11 individuals - nine civilians; including four children, two women, and one unborn fetus; and two HTS fighters, in addition to approximately 75 injuries.

G. Forced displacement

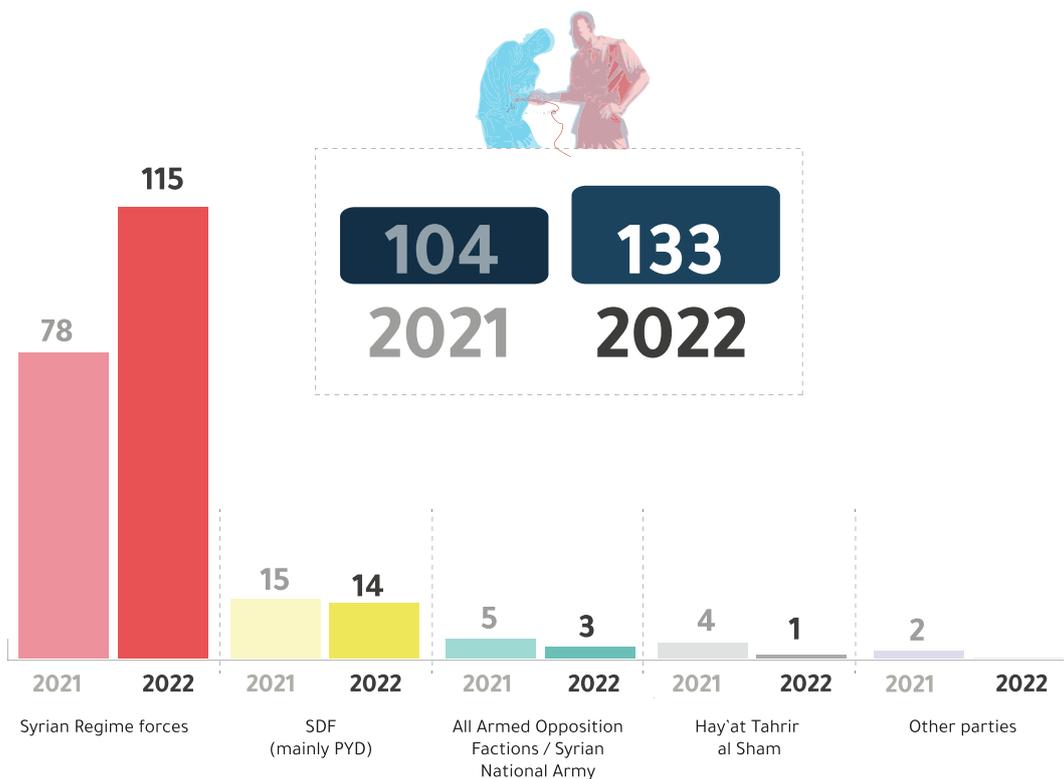
In 2022, according to SNHR's estimates, military operations by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria resulted in the displacement of approximately 75,000 civilians, including 11,000 civilians who were displaced as a result of the military operations by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

III. Comparison Between the Patterns of Human Rights Violations — Violations in 2021 and 2022

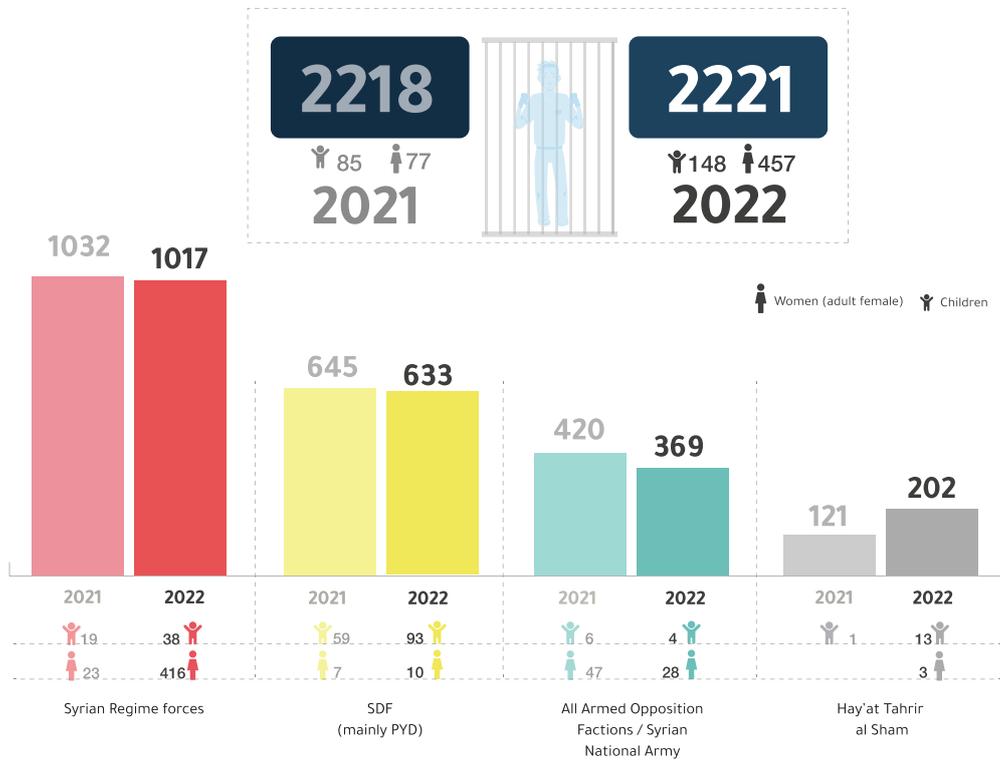
Comparison between the civilian death tolls at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



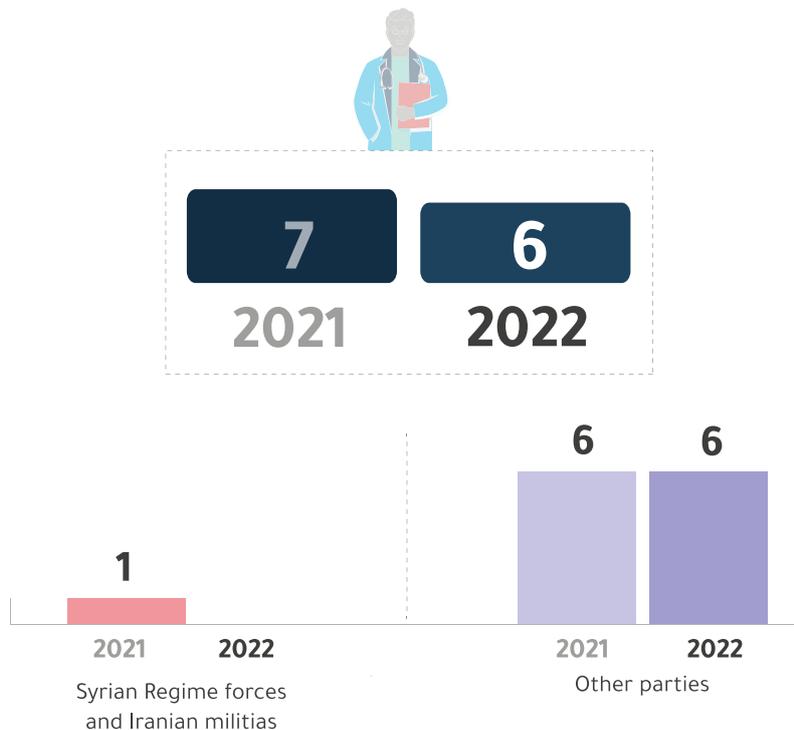
Comparison between the death tolls due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



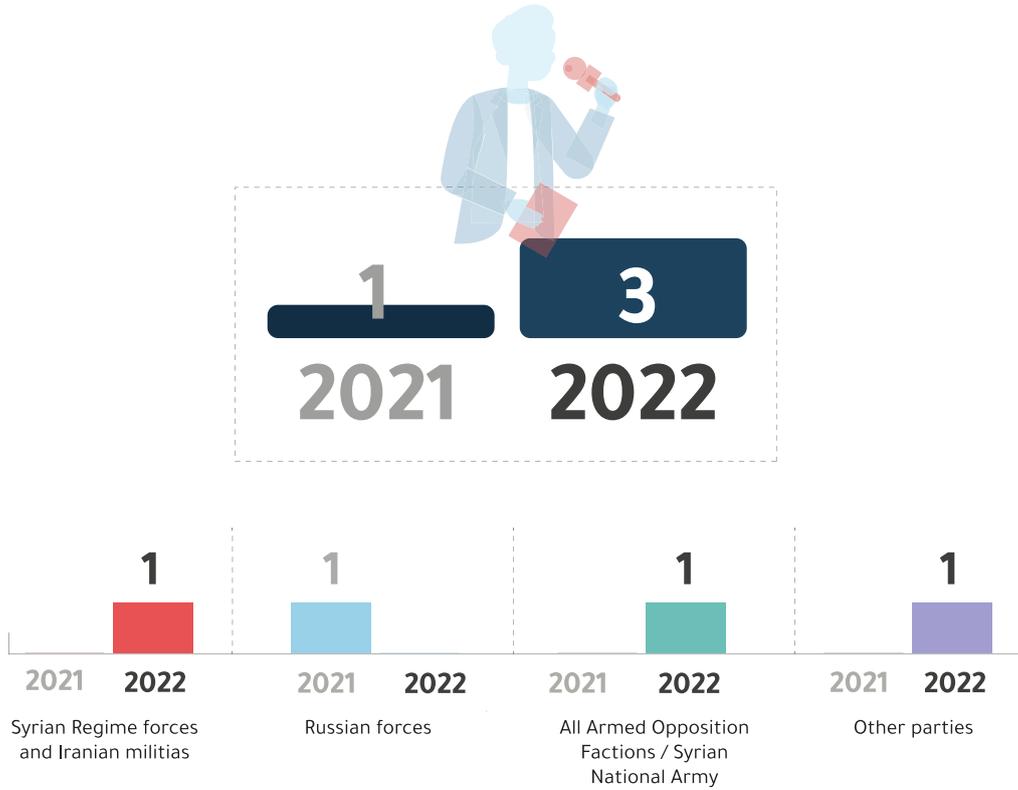
Comparison between arbitrary arrests at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



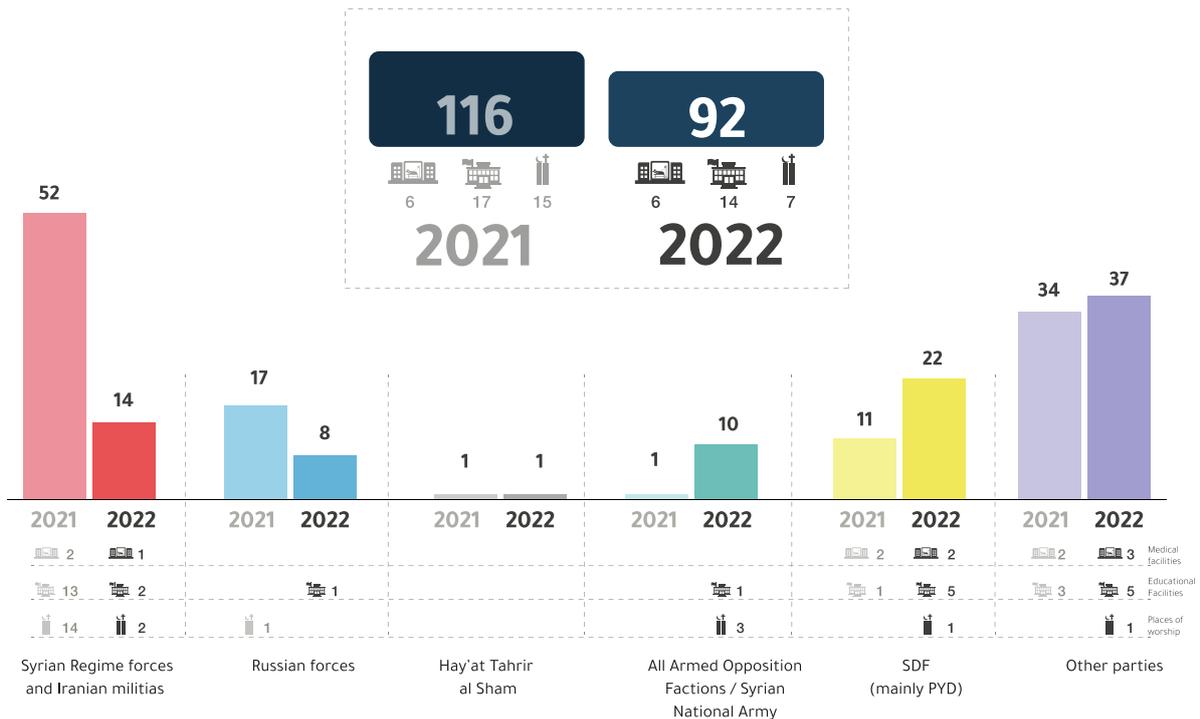
Comparison between death tolls among medical personnel at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



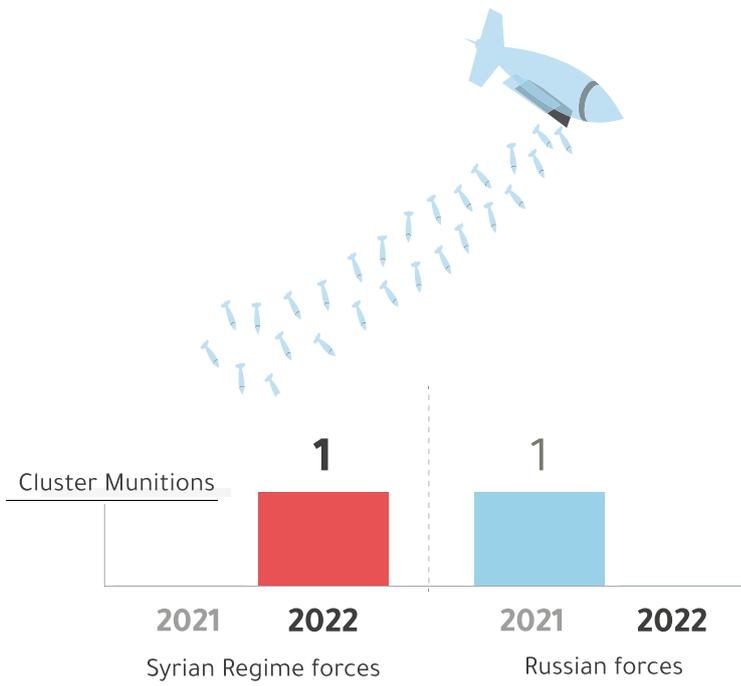
Comparison between death tolls among media workers at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



Comparison between attacks on vital civilian facilities at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



Comparison between unlawful attacks carried out by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2021 and 2022



Over 2021 and 2022, we haven't documented any incidents where chemical weapons, incendiary weapons, or barrel bombs were used.

IV. Most Notable Human Rights Violations by the Parties to the Conflict and Controlling Forces in Syria in 2022

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

1. Violations related to treatment of civilians and hors de combat fighters

A. Massacres and other acts of extrajudicial killings

Syria remains one of the world's most dangerous countries to live in for civilians, as strongly evidenced by the increased toll of victims of various forms of extrajudicial killing, ranging from unlawful acts of war to torture, medical negligence, or summary executions.

While 2022 saw a drop in the rate of military operations by Syrian regime forces and their allies, many areas saw increased military activities that resulted in civilian deaths. We identified a number of characteristics that distinguished the killings carried out by Syrian regime forces in 2022. Those include:

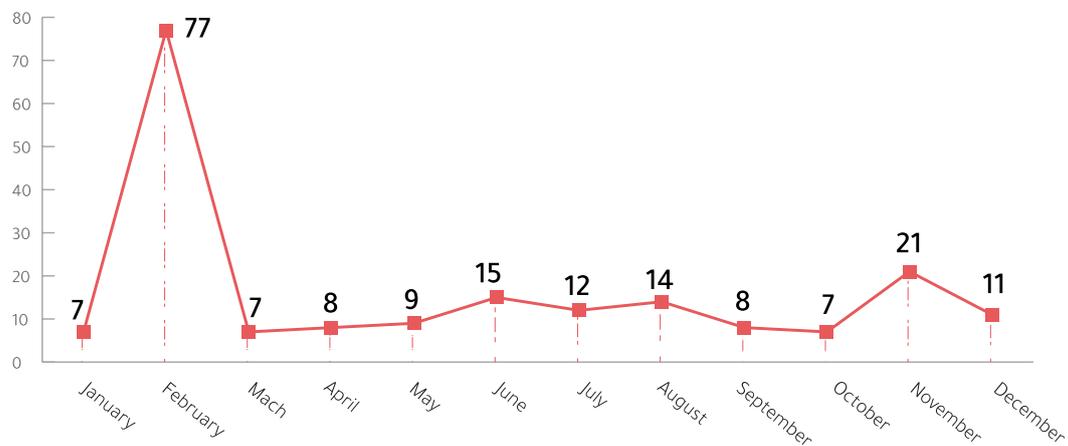
- In 2022, Syrian regime forces continued their ground-based attacks on populated areas under the control of other parties to the conflict. Those attacks resulted in civilian casualties, including children and women. In many of those incidents, we have documented bombardment by Syrian regime forces coinciding with reconnaissance overflights by Russian jets in the skies above the areas targeted. Those attacks were concentrated in Idlib governorate.
- In 2022, April coincided with the month of Ramadan, a holy month for Muslims around the world, including Syria, which is a Muslim-majority country, as well as with Easter. As in the previous years, daily monitoring by SNHR's victim documentation team showed that extrajudicial killings continued in Ramadan with no concession to its sanctity. The killing and persecution of civilians, as well as the targeting of their place of worship during sacred periods like Ramadan is a double violation, since it also demonstrates a desecration of people's faith, as well as fueling sectarian resentment and intensifying societal divisions.
- Since mid-2022, we have again begun documenting deaths by sniper shootings. The last incident of this kind we had recorded took place at the end of 2021. As SNHR's database shows, we documented the deliberate killing of three civilians (one child and two women) by snipers. It is important to note that in cases like this, the sniper must have been fully aware that their victim was a child and/or a woman,
- In 2022, we recorded cases of killing of refugees/IDPs returning to Syrian regime-controlled territories.
- In 2022, we documented an attack involving the use of cluster munitions by Syrian regime forces that targeted an area housing many IDPs camps in Idlib suburbs. The attack, on November 6, resulted in a massacre, in which nine civilians were killed, including five children and two women.
- In 2022, deaths due to torture and medical negligence at the Syrian regime's detention centers continued, as did summary executions.

In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of 196 civilians, including 30 children and seven women (adult female) at the hands of Syrian regime forces, who were also responsible for two massacres during the same period.

Women and children account for 19 percent of the overall death toll at the hands of Syrian regime forces, in what is a definitive indicator of Syrian regime forces' deliberate targeting of civilians through indiscriminate bombardment and summary executions.

In comparison, Syrian regime forces killed 261 civilians, including 68 children and 32 women (adult female) in 2021. In addition, Syrian regime forces were responsible for five massacres in 2021.

The graph below shows the distribution of the 196 civilians killed at the hands of the Syrian regime in 2022 by month:



As shown in the graph, the death toll recorded in February was notably high; this is because February saw the Syrian regime notifying the families of 54 individuals from the town of Deir al-Asafeer in the Damascus suburbs of the deaths of their relatives imprisoned by the regime. These families were notified of their loved ones' deaths through the civil register office. We, at SNHR, believe that those notifications constitute damning evidence against the Syrian regime that arrested those individuals who went on to become forcibly disappeared persons, since the regime had consistently denied their detention up until their families were notified of their deaths. We believe the cause of death in all cases was medical negligence and torture.

- [Some of the most notable⁵ cases of extrajudicial killings at the hands of Syrian regime forces](#)

On Saturday, February 12, 2022, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a heavy mortar shell targeting [a gathering of civilians near a house in al-Sharqi neighborhood in Ma'aret al-Na'san village](#) in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. [The attack killed six civilians, from the same family, including two girls and two women, and injured three others.](#) Ma'aret al-Na'san village was under the joint control of the SNA and HTS at the time of the incident.



Burial of victims killed in artillery bombardment by Syrian regime forces who fired a mortar shell at the al-Sharqi neighborhood of Ma'aret al-Na'san village in Idlib - February 12, 2022

On Saturday, August 13, 2022, [Kayed Fayez Rashaq](#), aged 48, was shot dead by servicemen from the Syrian regime's 4th Division as he was passing through a checkpoint in al-Mashkouna area near his home village of Flaita in Damascus suburbs. Kayed had been a refugee living in Aarsal Camp in Lebanon, returning to Syria after agreeing to a security settlement with the Syrian regime. This incident proved once again, as we have repeatedly stressed in our reports, that Syria is not safe for the return of refugees.

On Sunday, November 6, 2022, [Ahmad Jamal Qalli](#) was killed in artillery bombardment by Syrian regime forces who fired multiple shells which landed near a group of civilians, including Qalli, who were picking olives at the time in an olive grove to the south of their home village of Kafrlata in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area where the killing took place was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

The families of victims subjected to extrajudicial killing also suffered an additional violation by the Syrian regime. Although hundreds of thousands of Syrian citizens have been killed, 'disappeared' or gone missing since the early days of the popular rising in March 2011, they have not been officially registered

5. As documented on our database, these cases were selected according to the severity of the human and material losses, as well as the pattern of weapons used and the context of the incident.

as dead within the competent official state departments, namely the Civil Registry Department. The Syrian regime brutally controls the issuance of death certificates, which are not made available to any of the families of its victims, whether they were killed at the hands of the Syrian regime or by other parties, or to the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared. The Syrian regime only allows death certificates to be issued for those who meet the narrow criteria set by the regime and its security services. In many previous reports, we have discussed the phenomenon of the Syrian regime's forcing victims' families to make false statements s blackmailing them into signing reports prepared by the security services stating that 'armed terrorist gangs', rather than the Syrian regime, killed their loved ones by withholding death certificates until they sign these false statements. The Syrian regime has not only failed to launch any judicial investigations into the causes of death for hundreds of thousands of Syrians but has also failed to hold to account even one member of its security or military forces for their involvement in these killings.

In order to obtain a death certificate, the Syrian regime relies on three things:

- The regime prepares a medical report in which it gives a false cause of death, such as a heart attack for those forcibly disappeared in its detention centers, or claims falsely that the victim died as a result of injuries from war munitions.
- Statements from the local neighborhood headman or 'Mukhtar' and from any witnesses, who are asked to confirm the death.
- Acknowledgement of the victims' families, who often urgently need to obtain a death certificate; for this reason, family members understandably feel they have no choice but to remain silent about the true cause of death and those responsible for it.

Thanks to the ongoing monitoring, we have been able to **record three methods used by the Syrian regime to register limited numbers of the victims who were killed or the forcibly disappeared persons who were killed subsequently**. We detailed this matter in a report released on August 19, 2022, entitled, ['The Syrian Regime, Through Its Security Services and State Institutions, Controls the Incidents of Registering the Deaths of Victims Killed/'Disappeared' in the Armed Conflict Since March 2011'](#)

We note that the vast majority of victims' families are unable to obtain death certificates from the Syrian regime, for fear of linking their name to that of a person who was detained by the regime and died under torture, meaning that he or she was a dissident who opposed the Syrian regime, or if their loved one being labelled as a 'terrorist' if he/se is wanted by the security services; additionally, many victims' families have been forcibly displaced outside the areas controlled by the Syrian regime.

B. Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention

that Syrian regime forces have continued to persecute and target Syrian citizens in areas under regime control in connection with their political dissent and expression of opinions, despite the right to both being guaranteed by the Syrian constitution and international law. This once again proves a crucial and inescapable truth which we have reiterated many times in the past: no Syrian citizen can feel safe from arrest since these are carried out without any legal grounds or any oversight by any independent judiciary, being administered by the regime's security services with no judicial involvement. Following these arrests, detainees are routinely classified as forcibly disappeared persons, and thus the areas under the control of the Syrian regime cannot be considered, even remotely, to be a safe haven for those living in it, let alone for the return of refugees or IDPs.

The year 2022 was particularly marked by the issuance of a number of decrees and laws⁶ that legalized and further enshrined arrests and persecuting civilians. Syrian regime forces have carried arrests in the past year citing various causes, with some of these causes surfacing repeatedly and consistently, while others were related to specific contexts. Those include:

In 2022, Syrian regime forces continued to pursue and arrest individuals who had agreed to security settlements. Those include civilians who were formerly activists in the medical and humanitarian relief fields when their areas were under the control of other parties. Such arrests were concentrated in 2022 in the governorates of Damascus suburbs, Daraa, Deir Ez-Zour, and Raqqa, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. In 2022, SNHR documented no fewer than 407 cases of arbitrary arrest/detention involving individuals who had agreed to security settlements with the Syrian regime. Of these 407, three were women (adult females).

We recorded mass arrests that targeted civilians, including women, over expressing critical views on social media of the deteriorating living situation or government corruption in the areas under the control of Syrian regime force, with most of these arrests carried out by branches of the regime's Criminal Security division across Syria. The targets of these arrests included pro-regime media figures, university students, government employees, and lawyers, with individuals arrested in this context facing a series of charges related to the [Counter-Cybercrime Law](#). In 2022, SNHR documented the arrest of 124 individuals, including 19 women, on the grounds of the Counter-Cybercrime Law.

We documented a number of arrests/detentions that were carried out by regime security branches targeting civilians for the purpose of, we believe, extorting ransom money from detainees' families. Some of those arrests involved civilians who had received money transfers from abroad on the pretext of dealing in a foreign currency. Those arrests were concentrated in several Syrian governorates - most notably Damascus suburbs, Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama. We also noticed that the overwhelming majority of those arrests targeted civilians who had previously been released from regime detention, with many of the families telling us the arrests were carried out for the purpose of extortion and soliciting money in exchange for the former detainees' release.

6. People's Assembly of Syria. Law No. 15 of 2022 that includes amendments to a number of articles of the Public Penal Code issued in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 148/1989 and its amendments. <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=22937&RID=-1&Last=120&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

People's Assembly of Syria, Law No. 20 of 2022 providing for restructuring the criminal legal rules on cybercrime included in Legislative Decree No. 17/2012. <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=22958&RID=-1&Last=113&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

We documented arrests targeting returnees, both refugees returning from other countries and IDPs as they attempted to return to their original areas of residence under the control of the Syrian regime. These arrests were concentrated at land crossings with Lebanon, as well as Turkey, particularly in the latter case at the 'Kasab Crossing'. We also recorded arrests targeting refugees returning as part of the voluntary repatriation program [resumed](#) by Lebanon's General Security on September 5, 2022. Those arrests targeted children, women, and individuals who had previously agreed to security settlements with the regime.

In 2022, no fewer than 228 cases of arbitrary arrest/detention by Syrian regime forces of people returning to their original areas of residence under the control of regime forces, including eight children, six women (adult female), and 11 elderly people. The 228 cases are divided between:

- 151 cases involving returning refugees, most of whom were returning from Lebanon.
- 77 cases involving IDPs returning from the areas of displacement to the Syrian regime territories.

Furthermore, we recorded arrests over various causes, such as family relations to political activists or dissidents of the Syrian regime, contacting individuals living in non-regime controlled areas, travelling between the territories of the Syrian regime and territories under the control of other parties, or for the purpose of recruitment.

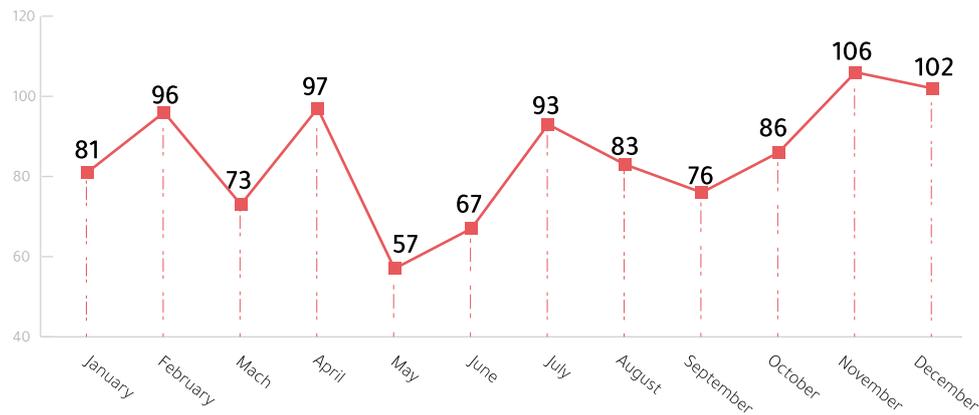
In terms of releases in 2022, we recorded that Syrian regime forces released no fewer than 851 individuals, including 28 children and 71 women, distributed according to the grounds of the arrest as follows:

- 124 individuals released from the civilian prisons across governorates after serving their arbitrary sentences. Those releases were not related to the regime's amnesty decrees. Their sentence ranged from one year to 10 years on average.
- 141 individuals released from security branches without facing a trial. They were held for a period ranging from several weeks to two months on average.
- 586 individuals released from detention centers in accordance with Amnesty Decree No. 7 for 2022, including 63 women and 17 individuals who were children at the time of their arrest. Those were released from the various civilian and military prisons as well as security branches across Syria. Of the 586 released, 162 individuals at least had agreed to security settlements with the Syrian regime before their arrest and had received assurances that they would not face prosecution by the Syrian regime. Among the 586 arrested as well were 28, including four woman, individuals who were refugees or otherwise returning to Syria from abroad.

It is worth noting that 2022 saw no releases in relation to the reconciliation and settlements that were struck by the Syrian regime in many areas of Idlib, Daraa, Damascus suburbs, and Aleppo.

SNHR's team documented⁷ that no fewer than 1,017 individuals, including 38 children and 416 women were arbitrarily arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2022. Of these, 146 have been released, while 871 of the 1,017, have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance. In 2021, meanwhile, we documented that no fewer than 1,032 individuals, including 23 women and 19 children, were arbitrarily arrested by Syrian regime forces.

The 1,017 cases of arbitrary arrest recorded in 2022 are distributed as follows:



As the graph shows, November and December saw a significant rise in arbitrary arrests, with these two months seeing mass arrest campaigns by the Syrian regime targeting returnees, both refugees and IDPs, who were trying to return to their original areas now under the control of Syrian regime forces.

- Some of the most notable cases of extrajudicial killings at the hands of Syrian regime forces

On Tuesday, February 1, 2022, servicemen from the Syrian regime's Criminal Security division arrested five civilian residents of Latakia city, including three women, on charges of having dealings with suspicious webpages and websites run from abroad for the purpose of insulting, defaming, and harming the image of the state. All were taken to a regime detention center in Latakia city.

On Monday, April 11, 2022, servicemen from the Syrian regime's Military Security Force carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Jisreen town in the Eastern Ghouta, east of Damascus Suburbs governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of five civilians who previously worked in the medical and humanitarian relief fields while the area was controlled by factions of the armed opposition. Those arrested, who were among the residents who had agreed to security settlements with the regime, were taken to a regime detention center in Damascus city.

7. SNHR notes that any discrepancies found between its periodic reports and annual reports arise from adding newly documented cases or concluding investigations into incidents and cases of arrest that took place in 2022 and have been added to the figures for their respective months.

Ahmad Muhammad Fathallah, from Shnan village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was released by Syrian regime forces under Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022 by which detainees accused of terrorism by the Syrian regime were released. On Thursday, June 2, 2022, Syrian regime forces re-arrested Ahmad as he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints in Aleppo governorate while trying to travel to areas controlled by the SNA in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Adham Seif al Din and Adham Hussein Jadid, from Madaya town, northwest of Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1989 and 1992 respectively, were arrested by servicemen from the Syrian regime's Air Security Force on Monday, August 15, 2022, while they were passing through a regime checkpoint near Kasab border crossing in the northern suburbs of Latakia governorate upon their return from Turkey to Syria. They were taken to a regime detention centers in Aleppo city. It should be noted that both civilians were attempting to settle their security status.

Fatima Mohammad Qanbar, and her two nephews, children Mohammad and Koli Othman Qanbar, who originally came from Kawanda village, one of the villages around Maidaniyat of Afrin city in northern Aleppo governorate, have been living in Tal Ref'at city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. They were arrested by Syrian regime forces on Wednesday, September 21, 2022, while they were passing through a regime checkpoint near al Layramoun roundabout in the city of Aleppo. They were taken to an undisclosed location.



Koli Othman Qanbar, child



Mohammad Othman Qanbar, child

Pictures of former prisoners released by Syrian regime forces showing the effect of blatant medical negligence

Former detainee Ahmad Adel al-Barghout from Khattab town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate. Born in 1980, Ahmad was arrested in July 2018 by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in Misyaf city in western Hama governorate as he was returning from Lebanon. Ahmad was transferred several times and was last held at Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus suburbs governorate. He was released on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, from Seydnaya Prison after being imprisoned for nearly four years and a half. The picture shows Ahmad's physical and health condition before and after he was arrested.



C. Torture in regime detention centers

Torture has been practiced in Syria with the same frequency and using the same methods since 2011. We do not believe, nor do we see any indicator or hope that, it will be stopped by the Syrian regime without a political change of the regime's existing leadership, which has never ordered or carried out any serious investigation or engaged in any efforts to hold those involved in practicing torture accountable for their actions. We are still discovering and documenting cases of brutal torture and deaths due to torture. We are concerned for the fate of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons. The arrest process itself, which is in reality more of an abduction, is a form of torture. Moreover, torture in security branches and detention centers is not limited to a certain scope or to certain individuals. In other words, we cannot state that specific individuals are alone responsible for particular acts of torture since the practice of torture is unrestricted and ceaseless at all levels throughout the duration of victims' detention which can last for years. Additionally, the detention conditions are severely poor, especially in relation to medical negligence, which is in and of itself a form of ongoing torture that can also last for years. We have released a detailed report documenting the most notable methods of torture used by Syrian regime forces in their detention centers and military hospitals, counting up [to 72 methods](#) of physical, psychological, and sexual torture that have all been and are practiced in a deliberate and widespread manner in regime detention centers. Additionally, no detainee is excluded from being subjected to torture, including women, children, elderly or sick prisoners, and persons with special needs.

Torture often reaches its most brutal levels during the interrogation of detainees with the aim extracting confessions, with these coerced, fabricated confessions then cited as evidence in charges against the detainee, and used to justify sentences issued in one of the regime's extraordinary courts. This has been the case with all sentences issued against political detainees by the Counterterrorism Court and the State Security Court, as well as other courts. As such, those sentences are wholly null since they are based on false accusations of crimes that were not committed by the detainee in question. The overwhelming majority of detainees go on to become forcibly disappeared. Enforced disappearance in and of itself is another form of torture since it entails completely cutting the detainee off from the outside world, including their family, friends, and lawyer, which inflicts horrible psychological trauma throughout the entire period of enforced disappearance.

Violations involving torture are crimes of a systematic and widespread nature. Therefore, they cannot possibly be committed on an individual level within the Syrian regime without their being based on a central regime policy that implicates the highest echelons of power within the regime.

On March 30, 2022, the Syrian regime's President issued Law No.16 for 2022 criminalizing torture,⁸ which claimed that the regime considers this crime a felony requiring severe punishment for its perpetrator, or for those who participated in inflicting it, as well as those who incited them to do so. In Syrian law, torture is characterized as a felony subject to a ten-year criminal statute of limitations if the perpetrator is not subjected to public prosecution immediately. SNHR issued [a report](#) previously in which we explained that there is a flaw in the Syrian regime's system of categorizing torture⁹ and creating the related legislation,¹⁰ in addition to a flaw in the text of the 'law' itself. For one, the law does not include crimes of torture committed before the date of its issuance. Also, the law omits the inhuman and cruel conditions of detention in which detainees are held. We have further expanded on those fundamental points in [our 11th annual report on torture in Syria](#), which is released on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This law will have no effect at all and will not help to deter the regime's security apparatus from practicing torture as long as the remaining oppressive laws are still in effect, as they give impunity to the security authorities' practices, guaranteeing immunity from any judicial prosecution.¹¹

Between March 30, 2022, when the law criminalizing torture came into effect and the end of 2022, SNHR documented the cases of no fewer than 42 individuals who died due to torture in regime detention centers. We have also documented many summons issued by the regime's security apparatus for relatives of torture victims across Syria, summoning them for questioning during which they were interrogated and warned against publicly revealing any information about the deaths of their loved ones under the threat of arrest.

In 2022, SNHR documented that no fewer than 115 deaths of individuals due to torture and medical negligence at the hands of Syrian regime forces, including one child and one woman, while 78 individuals were documented as having died due to torture at the hands of Syrian regime forces in 2021.

8. SANA. (2022, March 30). al-Raʿīs al-Asad yaşdurū qānwnan ltjrym al-ta'dhīb [President Assad Passes Law Criminalizing Torture]. Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://sana.sy/?p=1616786>

9. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'Laws' 15 and 16 of 2022 Issued by the Syrian Regime: Textually Flawed and Impossible to Implement. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://snhr.org/?p=57764>

10. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022). 'Laws' 15 and 16 of 2022 Issued by the Syrian Regime: Textually Flawed and Impossible to Implement. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://snhr.org/?p=57764>

11. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022a). At Least 196 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in Syria in November 2022, Including 11 Children and Three Women, Mostly at the Hands of Syrian Regime Forces. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://snhr.org/?p=58878>

- Some of the most notable cases of death due to torture and medical negligence

Isam Adham al-Dandashi, born in 1993, from Tal Kalakh city in the western suburbs of Homs governorate, was a high school student at the time of his arrest by Syrian regime forces on Wednesday, June 26, 2013. He was arrested at a makeshift hospital in Tal Kalakh city in Homs governorate where he was receiving treatment for a gunshot wound to his abdomen inflicted during a raid by Syrian regime forces on the city. He has been classified as forcibly disappeared ever since, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of his detention and refusing to allow anyone to visit him, even lawyers. On Monday, March 7, 2022, his family learned that he had died in a regime detention center in 2015. We can confirm that he was in poor health due to his earlier injury, which makes it highly likely that he died due to torture and medical negligence. We can also confirm that Syrian regime forces have yet to return his body to his family.



Isam Adham al-Dandashi

Yasin Ghazi Abu Rukba from Nawa city in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate was 34 years old when he was arrested in 2018 by Syrian regime forces. Yasin, who had formerly defected from the Syrian regime's forces, was detained after he surrendered himself to settle his security situation. He has been forcibly disappeared ever since, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of his detention and refusing to allow anyone to visit him, even lawyers. On Tuesday, April 19, 2022, Syrian regime forces notified his family of his death in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus suburbs governorate. His body, bearing signs of torture, was returned to his family. We can confirm that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, which makes it highly likely that he died due to torture and medical negligence.



Yasin Ghazi Abu Rukba

Wafaa Mohammad Thafer Ra'ed, woman born in 1973 from al-Qsair city in western Homs governorate. She was arrested on June 25, 2013, by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint near Tadmur Roundabout in southern Homs city. She has been forcibly disappeared ever since, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of her detention and refusing to allow anyone to visit her, even lawyers. On Sunday, May 8, 2022, her family learned through a released detainee that she had died in a regime detention center. We can confirm that she was in good health at the time of her arrest, which makes it highly likely that she died due to torture and medical negligence. SNHR can also confirm that Syrian regime forces have not returned her body to the her family.

Saleh Ahmad Saleh, a child born in 2008, from al-Qameshli city in the northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was living in Aleppo city's al-Ashrafiya neighborhood when he was arrested on Saturday, August 13, 2022, by police officers affiliated with the police station in the city's al-Aziziya neighborhood, which is controlled by Syrian regime forces. The arrest took place in the area between al-Ashrafiya neighborhood and Masakin al-Sabeel in Aleppo city. Saleh was brutally beaten all over his body upon his arrest which was on charges of theft.

On Sunday, August 14, 2022, Saleh's family received notification from al-Aziziya Neighborhood Police Station personnel ordering his father to go to the police station; on his arrival, they informed him that his son had died in custody, claiming that he had committed suicide by hanging himself, and told him to take his son's dead body without even providing him with any forensic report. The child's father refused to take his son's body away until after a forensic report was issued. The boy's family received his body from the Forensic Department in Aleppo city on August 15, 2022, with the regime's forensic pathologists predictably supporting the police's claim that the child had 'committed suicide'.

On Thursday, August 18, 2022, SNHR obtained photos and videos, clearly showing the lethally brutal torture that the child Saleh Ahmad Saleh had been subjected to in custody. SNHR released a [statement](#) condemning the killing of the child Saleh.



In most cases, the Syrian regime does not notify its victims' families of their relatives' death in detention centers on the date of their death. Instead, families learn of their detained loved ones' deaths long after they take place, finding out about them either through former prisoners or after visiting and checking with the Military Police offices in Damascus multiple times, or through the civil register offices. In most cases, the families receive this information years after the date of the detainee's death. In this context, we documented no fewer than 64 cases in 2022 in which families had learned of their relatives' death during visits to the civil register offices in Syrian governorates. Most of these families confirmed to us that their dead relatives were in good health at the time of their arrest. We believe that all these detainees died due to torture and medical negligence, except for a small percentage who were executed following a death sentence issued by the Field Military Courts. Of these, we documented no fewer than 54 individuals from Deir al-Asafeer town in Damascus suburbs whose families learned of their death by obtaining death certificates from the civil register offices between February and April of this year. All of these victims had been arrested by Syrian regime forces who subsequently denied having any information about them, and, as such, were classified as enforced disappearance cases. In mid-April 2022, we released [a detailed report](#) containing copies of death certificates issued by the civil register offices to the families of forcibly disappeared persons. Twenty-one of these death certificates (of which SNHR obtained copies) specify the same date of death for all the individuals, which leads us to believe that they were executed after receiving death sentences from the Field Military Court.

Since the start of 2022, we have begun to receive notification of death certificates being issued for individuals whose cases had not been revealed before, and whose families were unaware of their status. Some of these death certificates were issued for very prominent activists from the popular uprising against the Syrian regime, as well as for women and children. With these new developments, we decided to give due diligence and attention to this sensitive and complex issue. As of the end of December 2022, we obtained 547 new death certificates. The new batch of certificates stands out because these were obtained from sources within the Syrian regime and have not been published by the regime's civil register offices. On December 20, 2022, we released [a detailed report](#) on this issue.

D. Violations of children rights

Children in Syria experience various and repeated patterns of violations that differ in their severity, commonness, and current and future ramifications on Syrian children. At SNHR, we focus on the gross and life-threatening violations as determined by the UN Security Council, which are documented based on our methodology. Naturally, killing children is classified as the primary and most dangerous violation taking place in Syria, more especially considering the significantly high numbers of children victims. The second most dangerous violation is arrest/abduction which goes on to become enforced disappearance in the overwhelming majority of cases, and then torture. We also focus on child conscription and attacks on educational facilities, which results in children falling out of the educational process.

Our last report concerning violations against children was released on International Children Day under the title, '[On World Children's Day: SNHR's 11th Annual Report on Violations Against Children in Syria](#)'. The report documented the most notable violations against children in Syria, with a special focus on 2022.

On Monday, April 4, 2022, Syrian regime artillery fired a rocket that targeted the al-Shamali neighborhood of Ma'aret al-Na'san village in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, killing four children, Yamin Jumma Yasin, Hamza Mansour Aswad, Malek Anas Daoudi, and Nasr Haj Ahmad, as they were on their way to the middle school in the village. The four children all came from Ma'aret al-Na'san village which was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the incident.

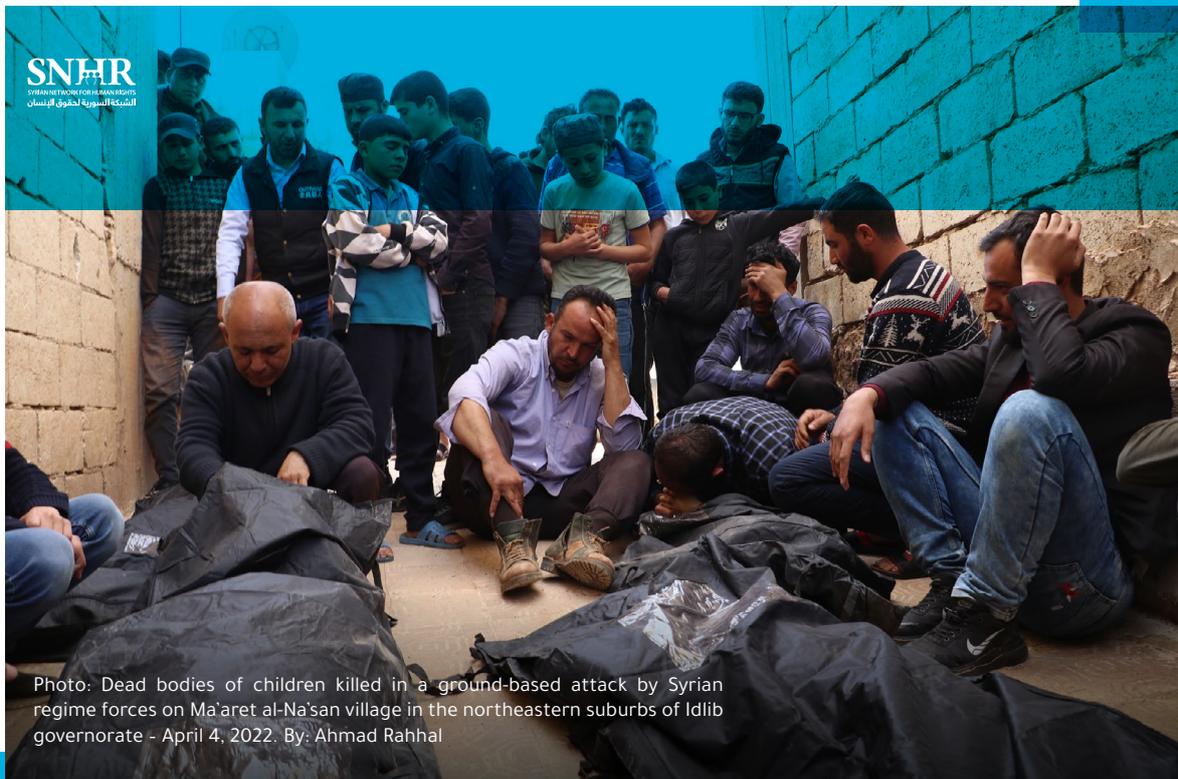


Photo: Dead bodies of children killed in a ground-based attack by Syrian regime forces on Ma'aret al-Na'san village in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate - April 4, 2022. By: Ahmad Rahhal

On Monday, July 4, 2022, Yasser Mohammad al-Ali, a two-and-a-half-year-old baby boy from Afes village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was [shot dead](#) by a Syrian regime sniper while he was in his family's home in the west of the village, which was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the incident.

On Monday, October 10, 2022, a 17-year-old boy named Mahmoud al-Jasim was [killed](#) while his mother was wounded in artillery bombardment by Syrian regime forces when they fired a shell at the town of al-Abzemou in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The shell landed near a wedding hall south of the town. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army forces and the HTS at the time of the incident.

Mohammad Saleh al-Daghli, male child, was [killed](#) on Sunday November 20, 2022, by cluster munitions from a previous bombing by the Syrian-Russian alliance. The cluster munitions exploded in an agricultural land near al-Dghali village, which is administratively affiliated with Jesr al-Shoghour city, in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

The exploitation of children in politics and political propaganda constitutes a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides for "protecting children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation." Moreover, the [Children's Rights Law of 2021](#) which was promulgated by the Syrian regime prohibits children joining political parties and by extension prohibits the use of children in political propaganda and having them join political organizations founded by a political party (the Baath Party in this case). What this demonstrates is that the Syrian regime does not even adhere to its own laws passed by the regime itself. Since the 1970 coup, the Syrian regime has blatantly taken advantage of and brainwashed children by forcing them to join its political organizations, such as the Syria Pioneers, also known as Talea al-Baath, which was founded in 1974, and the Union of the Revolution Youth, founded in 1970. Children are automatically enrolled in those organizations on going to school, and are forced to chant their party loyalist mantras every day at public schools, which have to hang pictures of the head of the Syrian regime and teach his sayings and slogans.

Photo of students carrying a picture of Hafez Assad during an event held by the Tala'ea al-Baath organization in October 2022 at Hyaleen al-Muhaddatha School in Hyaleen village, western suburbs of Hama governorate (Source: the school's social media pages).



E. Violations of women rights

Violence against women has risen steadily over the course of the past 12 years. Some of the patterns of violations against women; especially killing, torture, enforced disappearance, and sexual violence, have reached record levels, with Syria seeing the worst rates worldwide. All of this has shaped the tragic current reality of Syrian society. As of the end of 2022, no fewer than 8,467 of the women (adult female) detained by Syrian regime forces since March 2011 are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared by the regime. Those women and countless others have been subjected to the most horrible forms of torture.

Furthermore, women's basic rights have been violated for the past 12 years in every category, including the civil, political, social, economic, health, and psychological ones, as women have been denied all forms of protection against the ramifications of the conflict. Syria's women still lack the most basic forms of protection and security, with many suffering multiple violations simply for being female. This has continued to be the case even though most international laws and instruments, including the Geneva Convention and its two Protocols, international humanitarian law, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provide special protection to women in all circumstances, given their special status. Our last report concerning violations against women was released on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women under the name, '[On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women: SNHR's 11th Annual Report on Violations Against Females in Syria](#)'. The report covered the most notable violations and incidents against women in Syria with a special focus on 2022.

In 2022, Syrian regime forces continued perpetrating horrific violations against women. We documented women victims killed in ground-based and aerial attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces against areas under the control of the other parties, as well as documenting the targeted killing of a woman by a regime sniper this year.

[Rayya Mahmoud al-Hamdawi](#), a woman born in 1987, from Maskana town in eastern Aleppo governorate, was killed on June 9, 2022, by a Syrian regime sniper while she was working in agricultural land in al-Sawamea area to the west of Tadeif city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

[Maysa' Mohammad al-Damen](#), a pregnant, internally displaced woman from al-Kasibiya village in western Aleppo governorate, was aged 30 when she was killed on July 4, 2022, along with her unborn fetus, while her other daughter was wounded, in artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces who fired mortar shells at residential houses in Ma'aret al-Na'san village, northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

2. Violations related to the conduct of hostilities

A. Unlawful military operations attacks

i. Ground-based and aerial bombardment

As our continuous monitoring shows, aerial bombardment took a backseat to ground-based attacks throughout 2021 and 2022. The Syrian regime has carried out ground-based military assaults across Syria, which were concentrated in Idlib governorate in northwestern Syria. The regime's attacks have targeted populated areas far away from the dividing lines, with the regime failing to respect the principles of distinction¹² and proportionality¹³ in international humanitarian law. As such, the Syrian regime's attacks have resulted in casualties and destruction to vital civilian facilities.

In many of the incidents of Syrian regime bombardment which we documented, we found that this coincided with reconnaissance flights by Russian jets in the skies over the areas targeted.

The year 2022 was also marked by the documentation of no barrel bombs attacks for the second successive year.

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, at around 10:15 am, Syrian regime forces fired six artillery shells consecutively, in tandem with reconnaissance overflights by a Russian jet, targeting a fuel market controlled by Watad Petroleum, which is affiliated with HTS. Located on the southwestern outskirts of Termanein town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, the market stores fuel in underground depositories with tanks above the ground. One of the shells landed in an agricultural land near the market, [killing four civilians](#) and injuring others. The area was under the joint control of the SNA and HTS at the time of the incident.



12. "The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants. Attacks may only be directed against combatants. Attacks must not be directed against civilians." International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 1](#) of the customary international humanitarian law.

The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives. Attacks may only be directed against military objectives. Attacks must not be directed against civilian objects." International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 7](#) of the customary international humanitarian law.

13. "Launching an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, is prohibited." International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 14](#) of the customary international humanitarian law.

On Thursday, September 22, 2022, Syrian regime forces fired multiple artillery shells at Kafr Ama village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, killing Mohammad Hamdo Arab and injuring his sibling. Mohammad is from al-Abzemou town in the western suburbs of Aleppo. The area targeted was under the joint control of the HTS and armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Photo: A house destroyed by a Syrian regime forces' artillery attack on the southern outskirts of Shnan village, western Idlib - September 6, 2022.

ii. siege and threat of military operations

Since March 13, 2022, Syrian regime forces have been imposing a siege on the two neighborhoods of al-Sheikh Maqsoud and al-Ashrafiya in Aleppo city, which are under the control of the SDF. The siege, which has completely cut off the entry of flour, medications, medical supplies, and fuel for approximately 200,000 civilians, began as the result of a dispute between Syrian regime forces and the SDF, when troops at a checkpoint run by the Syrian regime's Fourth Division stopped the passage of a truck carrying sugar, prompting the SDF personnel stationed at a nearby point to engage in fighting with the checkpoint personnel, killing one regime fighter. In retaliation, the Syrian regime has imposed a siege on the two neighborhoods ever since. On April 5, we recorded that the bread supply ended in the neighborhood as a result of flour running out.

Since the beginning of December, the Syrian regime's Fourth Division has deployed reinforcements in the vicinity of both these neighborhoods, as well as in al-Shahba in northern Aleppo, which is under the control of the SDF, in an attempt to further intensify the siege on the area. The regime forces have blocked the passage of food and fuels, and imposed fees on civilians, while also seizing sums of money from civilians and merchants over disputes concerning the transfer of fuel from the SDF-controlled territories to those controlled by the Syrian regime, causing a price rise for heating materials on the local 'black market',¹⁴ which is operated by smugglers from the Syrian regime-controlled areas. One liter of black market diesel costs as much as 9,000 S.P., while one ton of firewood costs about 800,000 S.P..

14. A term referring to business transactions that evade tax laws and trade regulations. Goods sold on the black market are often smuggled, meaning they reach the market without being registered by official agencies, such as customs authorities.

B. Protected persons and objects

i. Medical sector

The Syrian regime has recognized the vital role played by humanitarian workers in easing civilians' suffering, reacting to this with methodical persecution and arrest of medical personnel. We have noticed that the targeting of medical workers, as well as their equipment and facilities, has been a calculated tactic adopted by the Syrian regime since the first days of the popular uprising in March 2011, when medics, hospitals, and doctors, who provided medical assistance for protesters wounded by regime forces while participating in peaceful demonstrations, were targeted. This also applied to anyone who worked to secure medical supplies or medications for treatment. As SNHR's database reveals, at least 3,407 medics are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared at the hands of Syrian regime forces. Furthermore, the Syrian regime and its allies have deliberately targeted medical teams, hospitals, and medical facilities in their aerial and ground-based attacks in a widespread and systematic manner. In many cases, the regime's and its allies' bombardment of civilian areas and massacres have been carried out in tandem with the targeting of medical and relief centers in order to prevent those teams from providing help at the time when it is most urgently needed. We also noticed that Syrian regime forces have deliberately bombardment some medical facilities multiple consecutive times, in a clear sign of the regime's intention to inflict the greatest damage possible on these facilities and to deny their services to civilians.

As medical personnel found themselves under the threat of death and arrest/enforced disappearance, hundreds of them opted to flee Syria. This means that the country has not only lost those medics who were killed or forcibly disappeared, but that large numbers of its remaining medical personnel also fled to save their own and their families' lives, which has had catastrophic and ongoing ramifications that will last for decades to come.

While 2022 saw a decline in the targeting of medical personnel and medical facilities in the military operations carried out by Syrian regime forces against the areas under the control of the other parties to the conflict, the Syrian regime did not stop its arrests/detention/enforced disappearance of medical personnel in its own areas, which led to many of the remaining medical sector personnel to flee. Moreover, the Syrian regime has made no serious steps to rehabilitate the destroyed medical facilities in the areas that returned to its control after 2019.

While we documented no deaths among medical personnel at the hands of Syrian regime forces in 2022 we recorded one attack on a medical facility during the year. In 2021, meanwhile, we documented the killing of at least one medical worker at the hands of Syrian regime forces, as well as two attacks on hospitals and medical points by regime forces.

On Sunday, February 27, 2022, Syrian regime forces fired two artillery shells that landed 20 meters away from a dispensary in Afes village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in casualties, although the dispensary building was not damaged. SNHR notes that the dispensary is empty and disused since most of the village's residents have fled due to its close proximity to dividing lines with Syrian regime forces. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

According to SNHR's database, no fewer than nine medical personnel were arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2022.

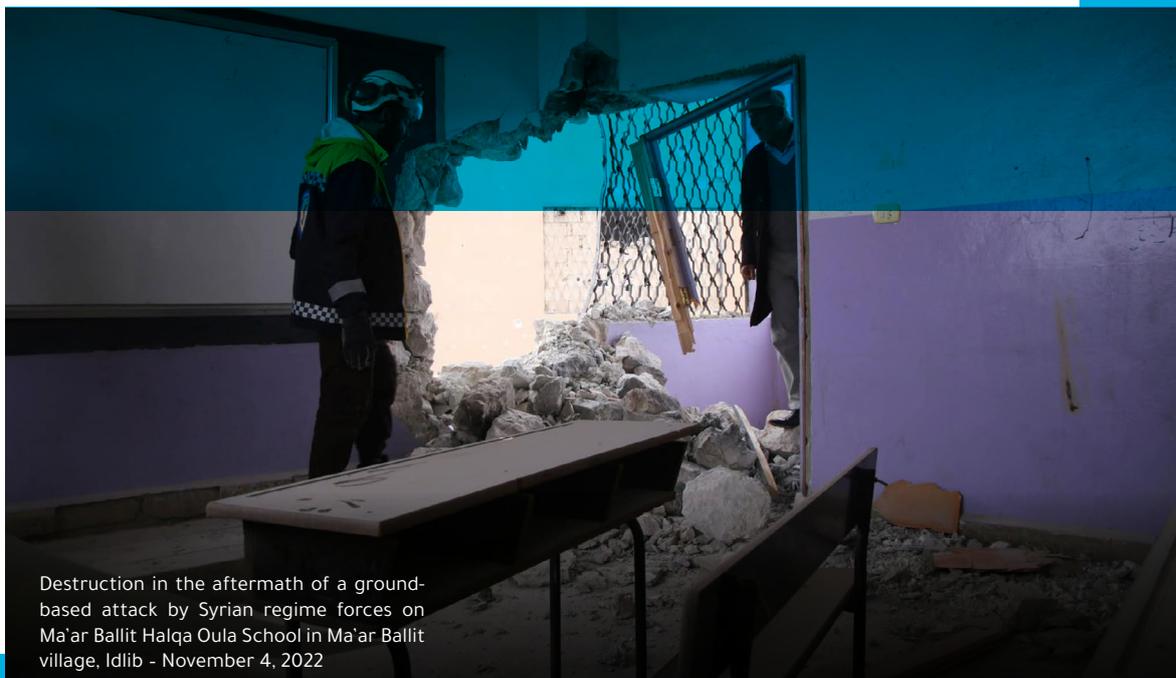
Abdul Hamid Atallah al-Jasim, a nurse from Hatla village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested on Wednesday, September 14, 2022, by Syrian regime forces in a raid on his house. He was taken to an undisclosed location.



ii. Educational sector

In 2022, we recorded at least two attacks on educational facilities (schools and kindergartens) by Syrian regime forces, while we recorded no fewer than 13 attacks in 2021 at the hands of the same forces.

On Friday, November 4, 2022, Syrian regime forces fired a number of artillery shells at the Ma'ar Ballit Halaqa Oula School in [Ma'ar Ballit](#) village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. [The school building was partially destroyed in the attack, which also caused moderate damage to the school's furniture.](#) The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



We also documented that Syrian regime forces have turned dozens of schools into military centers and have looted and destroyed their contents in a barbaric manner, mainly in the areas where the Syrian regime regained control. Those forces have become a menace and threat to education and learning facilities.

Nonetheless, the Syrian regime's targeting of the educational sector was not limited to bombarding educational facilities in areas outside its control, or using a number of educational facilities for military purposes. Rather, the regime has been targeting the minds of children, using the school curriculum as a propaganda tool, and perpetuating themes that support dictatorship and autocratic rule. We have archived many photos and videos showing schools' teaching staff trying to demonstrate their loyalty to and lavishing praise upon the head of the Syrian regime, and teaching children Baath party chants that date back decades.

Photo that was circulated on social media in early September 2022 of children carrying portraits of Bashar Assad in a school in Homs city at the start of the school year



Photo of students carrying pictures of Bashar Assad at an event entitled "Our Hope is Bashar... To Continue Our March" held on October 27, 2022, at the Mousab bin Umayr School in al-Qaboun neighborhood of Damascus city (Source: the school's social media pages).



Photo of students carrying a picture of Bashar Assad during an event held by the Tala'ea al-Baath organization in October 2022 at Hyaleen al-Muhaddatha School in Hyaleen village, western suburbs of Hama governorate (Source: the school's social media pages).



iii. Places of worship

The Syrian regime has targeted places of worship in bombardment of areas outside their control. In doing so, the Syrian regime showed no respect for the sanctity of places of worship, including both mosques and churches. Even worse, the regime has repurposed many places of worship in its territories into centers of a military nature. Moreover, the regime has utilized places of worship as instruments of politicization used to lavish praise on the ruling family and indoctrinate the people into unquestioning acceptance of one-party hereditary rule.

We documented no fewer than two attacks on places of worship by Syrian regime forces in 2021, while we recorded no fewer than 14 attacks on places of worship by the same forces in 2022.

On Tuesday, September 6, 2022, Syrian regime artillery forces bombed the southern outskirts of Shanan village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. One of the [shells fired in this bombardment hit the center of a main street near Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Mosque, known as al Mafraq Mosque](#). The explosion wounded one woman and caused moderate damages to the windows and the external walls of the mosque building. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham at the time of the incident.



iv. Media personnel

Since the start of the popular uprising, no party to the conflict has been wholly exempt from committing various and even creative practices to violate the freedom of the press and of expression. To that end, we have documented many patterns of serious violations; extrajudicial killing, arrest/enforced disappearance, torture, attacks on facilities, and enforcing laws curbing freedom of the press and of expression. It should be stressed, however, that the Syrian regime bears by far the greatest responsibility for the current state of affairs in Syria, which has been rated as one of the world's worst countries in terms of freedom of the press and of media work, with the regime's actions polluting the image of Syria and the Syrian people. The Syrian regime is the main and largest perpetrator of violations against journalists and media workers, surpassing all other parties to the conflict individually and collectively. Russian forces, in the practical sense, are also supporters and backers of the Syrian regime's violations. As such, Russian forces are jointly responsible, with their Syrian regime colleagues, for 85 percent of violations against journalists and media workers in Syria.

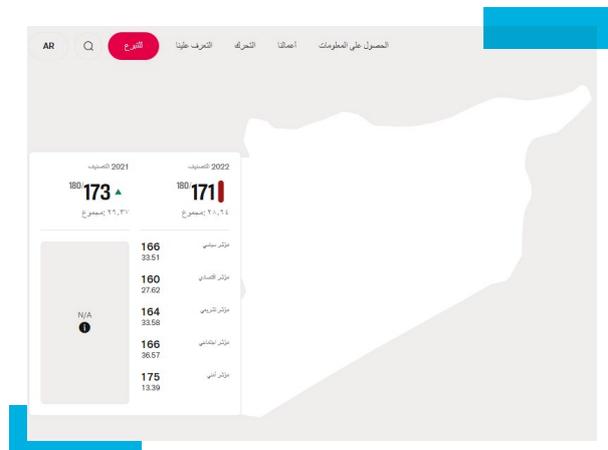
In 2022, the Syrian regime continued its general policy of censoring independent media outlets. The Syrian regime has maintained an absolute control of state media and rigorously censors any freedom of expression against media workers and citizens on the grounds of laws (either decrees or legislation passed through the People's Assembly which is completely controlled by the regime) that explicitly contradict international human rights law and alarmingly restrict the freedom of the press and of expression.¹⁵

15. "Media outlets are forbidden to publicize 1. Any content that would undermine national unity and national security, disrespect Abrahamic religions and religious beliefs, or instigate sectarian grudges.... 5. Any slight against the symbols of the state." People's Assembly of Syria, Legislative Decree No. 108 of 2011 on the Law of the Media. <https://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=5578&nid=4387&First=0&Last=14&CurrentPage=0>

"The council shall be composed of nine members, including the chair and their deputy who shall be appointed on the basis of their expertise in the field of media, communication, intellect, culture, and technical specialties related to the field media, provided that they are all fully naturalized Syrian national... c. The chair and the members of the council shall be appointed in a decree that specifies their compensation for a term of no more than three years, subject to renewal for a second term only." People's Assembly of Syria, Legislative Decree of 2011, Article 20. <https://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=5578&nid=4387&First=0&Last=14&CurrentPage=0>

In that context, the most recent law promulgated that further tightened the group on freedom of the press and of expression came into force on April 18, when the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar Assad, passed Law No. 20 of 2022,¹⁶ which re-regulates the regime's criminal rules concerning cybercrimes as specified in Legislative Decree 17/2012.¹⁷ The new law contains many ambiguous articles, and we believe it violates the freedom of press and of expression, and threatens digital rights and privacy online. The law consists of 50 articles that provide for even more severe punishments for producing online content found by the authorities to be of a dissident character. The law also provides for sentences comprising both jail time and a fine for anyone who publishes any content online for the purpose of "toppling or altering the ruling regime in the state" or "undermining the image of the state and threatening national unity." We have provided a brief analysis of this law in our annual report on the [most notable violations against media workers in Syria](#),¹⁸ which was released on May 3, 2022, to mark World Press Freedom Day.

Syria is currently ranked as 171 (out of 180) countries on the Reports Without Borders's (RSF) [2022 World Press Freedom Index](#). In other words, Syria is the world's ninth worst country in terms of freedom of the press. "In this country, at war for more than a decade," the RSF's index notes, "reporters are denied access to entire swathes of the territory. The regime treats the media as a tool for disseminating Baathist ideology and excludes any form of pluralism, driving many journalists into self-imposed exile."



In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of one journalist and media worker at the hands of Syrian regime forces, while we documented no deaths among media workers at the hand of the same forces in 2021.

Ahmad Tayseer al Eisa al Khatib, a 27-year-old media activist and student at the Faculty of Mass Communication at Damascus University, from al Jiza town in the eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in late 2018, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints as he was heading from Damascus city to Daraa city, despite having previously settled his security status. Since then, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Tuesday, August 16, 2022, his family learnt that he had died in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus



Ahmad Tayseer al Eisa al Khatib

16. Ministry of Communication and Technology, full text of the Cybercrime Law (20/2022) <https://mocht.gov.sy/news-0015>

17. People's Assembly of Syria, Legislative Decree No. 17 of 2012 on the implementation of the rules of the law related to communication on the world wide web and combating cybercrime. <https://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=4337&RID=1&Last=118&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

18. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022c). The Annual Report on the Most Notable Violations against Media Workers in Syria on World Press Freedom Day. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://snhr.org/?p=57794>

Suburbs governorate. SNHR's data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and medical negligence. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces have failed to hand over Ahmad's body to his family.

According to our database, in 2022, the Syrian regime was responsible for the arrest/detention/disappearance of no fewer than 23 journalists and media workers, including four women,

On Thursday, July 21, 2022, Alaa al-Din Muhi al-Din Hazbar was arrested by Syrian regime forces at the building housing the immigration and passport branch in Damascus city, while he was trying to obtain a new passport. He was taken to the regime's State Security branch in Damascus city. His fate remains unknown to SNHR as of this writing.



Born in 1987, Alaa al-Din, who comes from Deir al-Asafeer town, worked formerly as the head of the media office at the local council of Deir al-Asafeer town when it was under the control of armed opposition factions.

C. The use of prohibited weapons

Cluster munitions

In 2022, we recorded one attack by regime forces and affiliated militias using cluster munitions, while we recorded no attacks involving the use of cluster munitions at the hands of the same forces in 2021.

On Sunday, November 6, 2022, at around 06:54 Damascus time, Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias who we believe were stationed at al-Nayrab Military Airbase used a rocket launcher to fire at least eight BM-27URGAN 220mm rockets loaded with 9M27K1 cluster submunitions. The rockets exploded in rapid succession over a hilly area of northwestern and western Idlib governorate heavily populated with IDP camps, reaching as far as the Ahrash al-Bassil area, a military area housing an HTS military camp. The cluster munitions attack by Syrian regime forces resulted in the death of 11 individuals, including nine civilians. Of the victims, four were children, two were women, and one was an unborn baby, while the two non-civilian victims were HTS fighters. In addition, around 75 other people were wounded. SNHR has been able to pinpoint 29 locations hit by the cluster submunitions. A total of 26 of those locations are scattered among four camps in the area, with the explosion of the submunitions resulting in varying levels of material damage. [The interactive map in the link](#) below shows the sites where we documented damage caused by shrapnel from rocket remnants or by cluster munitions.

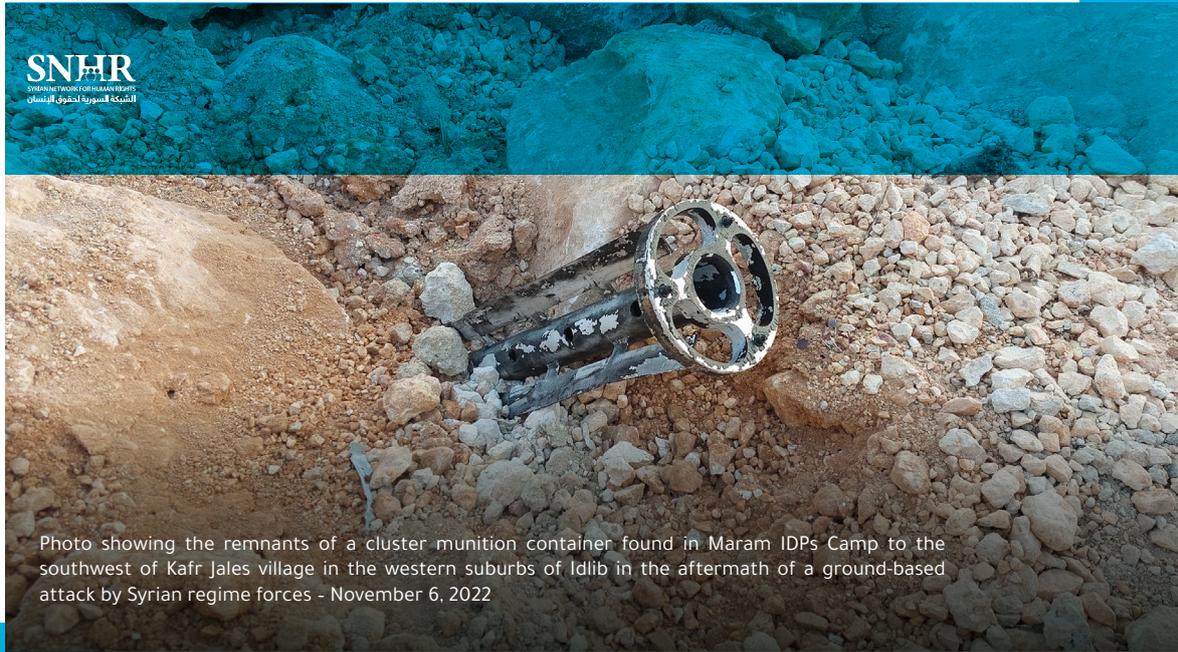


Photo showing the remnants of a cluster munition container found in Maram IDPs Camp to the southwest of Kafr Jales village in the western suburbs of Idlib in the aftermath of a ground-based attack by Syrian regime forces - November 6, 2022

Furthermore, the attack resulted in the displacement of most of the residents of the camps affected by the remnants of the bombardment who fled to safer areas in fear of another attack. Most of those who fled returned to their camps a few days later. SNHR estimates that approximately 7,500 civilians fled due to the attack.



Photo showing IDPs in Murin IDPs Camp in southern Murin village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate packing their luggage to flee the camp after its outskirts were targeted with rockets carrying cluster submunitions that originated from a site where Syrian regime forces are stationed - November 6, 2022

B. Russian forces

Since the start of Russia's intervention in Syria, Russian forces have been involved in horrific violations of international law, with some violations, such as killing and forced displacement, being perpetrated in such a way that they constitute a crime against humanity. Nonetheless, Russia has repeatedly claimed that its intervention in Syria is a legal one on the grounds of the 'intervention by invitation' principle in international law, stressing that Bashar Assad was responsible for requesting Russia's military intervention, i.e., that they were required to intervene at the request of an "elected, legitimate regime" in Syria, as well as citing [Security Council resolution 2249](#) adopted in November 2015. However, we, at SNHR, believe that the Russian military intervention lacks any legitimacy for numerous reasons that we detailed in our seventh annual report on [the most notable violations by Russian forces since the start of their intervention](#) on September 30, 2015. Beside its military intervention, the Russian side has played a wholly disruptive role in the political and humanitarian sphere that has manifested itself in attempts to normalize the Syrian regime and turn Syria into a weapons-testing ground.

On July 8, 2022, Russia again used its veto powers against extending UN cross-border aid delivery to northwestern Syria in attempt to help the Syrian regime to gain as much control and possession as possible over UN aid. Indeed, multiple Russian officials [stated several times prior to the UN voting session that Russia does not see the necessity to continue the mechanism for cross-border UN aid delivery to northwestern Syria](#).

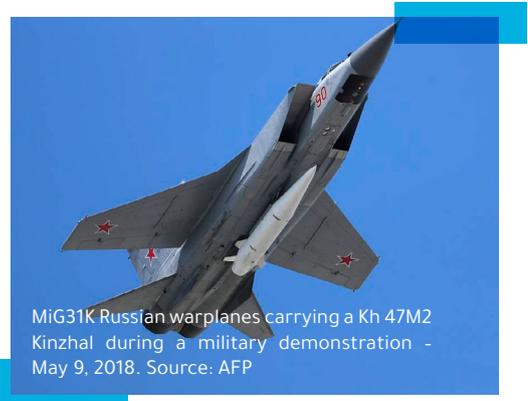
<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/funding-not-enough-meet-rising-humanitarian-needs-syria-top-official-tells-security-council-members-diverge-over-delivery-methods>

In its continued attempts to normalize the Syrian regime, Russia worked through its close ally, the Algerian regime, in an effort to restore Syria to the Arab League. Algeria conducted an extended round of diplomatic visits to other Arab countries in an effort to convince them not to stand in the way of the Syrian regime's return to the Arab League. Despite these efforts, the attempts ended in failure. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister Affairs, said at [a press conference](#) co-held with Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirate, in Abu Dhabi on March 17: "We are convinced of the importance of reactivating the efforts to return Syria to the Arab League."

Furthermore, Russia, through its ally the Syrian regime, continued to bring up the refugee issue, promoting the wholly false idea that Syria, specifically the areas under the control of the Syrian regime, is safe and stable and prepared to welcome back returning refugees.

On the issue of Russia turning Syria in a weapon testing ground, Russian officials have issued multiple statements on Russia's experimenting with new munitions in Syria and on the role played by this weapons-testing in raising Russia's combat capabilities. On February 15, for instance, the Russian Ministry of Defense revealed that MiG-31K and Tu-22M3 warplanes carrying hypersonic Kinzhal missiles had arrived at Hmeimim Airbase in Syria as part of a naval training exercise. According to the report published by the Russian state-owned [Sputnik Agency](#), the exercises took place in the Mediterranean Sea, and were launched from the Russian naval facility in Tartus in the presence of Army General Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Minister of Defense. On February 19, according to the [Russian newspaper Izvestia](#), Russian pilots tested the hypersonic Kinzhal missiles for the first time in Syria, with the report noting that the Kinzhal missiles are the fruit of the latest advancement in the Russian military, which were unveiled by President Vladimir Putin in a letter to Russia's Federal Assembly in 2018.

On February 18, the Russian state-owned domestic news agency RIA Novosti cited a Russian military source who said that Russian forces had deployed a new version of its Lancet-3 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that has the capacity to carry a large warhead in Syria "as a kind of test". The agency also noted that this aerial vehicle had been used in Syria multiple times against multiple targets.



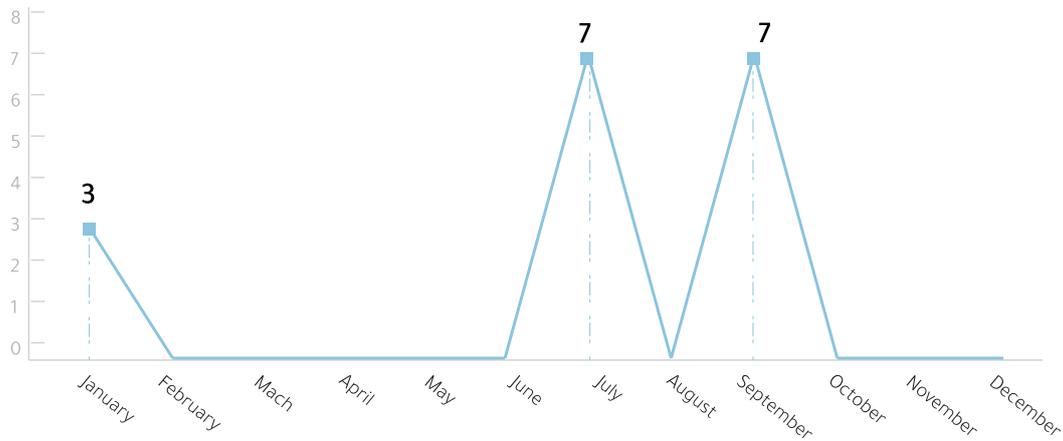
MiG31K Russian warplanes carrying a Kh 47M2 Kinzhal during a military demonstration - May 9, 2018. Source: AFP

In a broad sense, we noticed a decline in the frequency of Russian military operations in Syria in 2022. We believe this is due to Russia being preoccupied with the Ukrainian invasion which prompted the Russians to shift their military focus and capabilities to there. In any case, Russian attacks in Syria this year were concentrated in the northwest of the country against HTS military points, although Russian warplanes also carried out multiple airstrikes against vital civilian facilities in the same region, mostly on livestock farms, which resulted in great material damage.

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2022, we recorded the killing of 17 civilians, including eight children and one woman (adult female), at the hands of Russian forces, who were also responsible for two massacres. Meanwhile, Russian forces were responsible for the killing of 65 civilians, including 32 children and seven women (adult female) in 2021 which also saw Russia's forces perpetrating four massacres.

The graph below shows the distribution of the 17 civilians killed by Russian forces in 2022 by month:

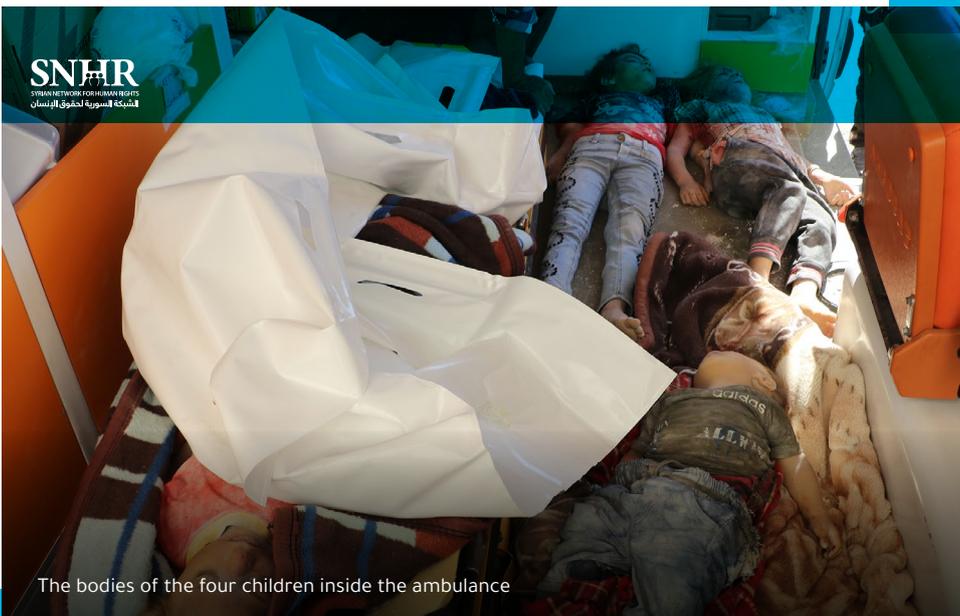


- Some of the most notable incidents of extrajudicial killing

On Friday, July 22, 2022, at dawn, fixed-wing Su-34 warplanes, believed to be Russian, carried out four raids (two double-tap airstrikes) on two locations on the outskirts of al Jadida village. known as Jadidat al-Jesr, the village is administratively affiliated with Nahiyat al-Janoudiya in the northern suburbs of Jisr al-Shoghour, western Idlib suburbs. Al Jadidia is one of a group of adjacent villages, most of whose residents are Christians, and is located about three km (line of sight) from the Syrian-Turkish border. 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:

First location

At around 5:50 am, 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. The attack resulted in a massacre, all of whose victims were civilians. Additionally, 13 civilians were injured in the attack, including the parents of the children killed.



SNHR spoke with Jihad Mathan,¹⁹ 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 building²⁰ (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. 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 civil defense teams started the rescue operations to pull the children out after the second airstrike. However, the children had died by then.



Complete destruction of an IDP shelter on the outskirts of al Jadida village, Idlib, which was subjected to a Russian airstrike on July 22, 2022

19. Via WhatsApp on July 27, 2022.

20. Its dimensions are approximately 12 x 8 meters

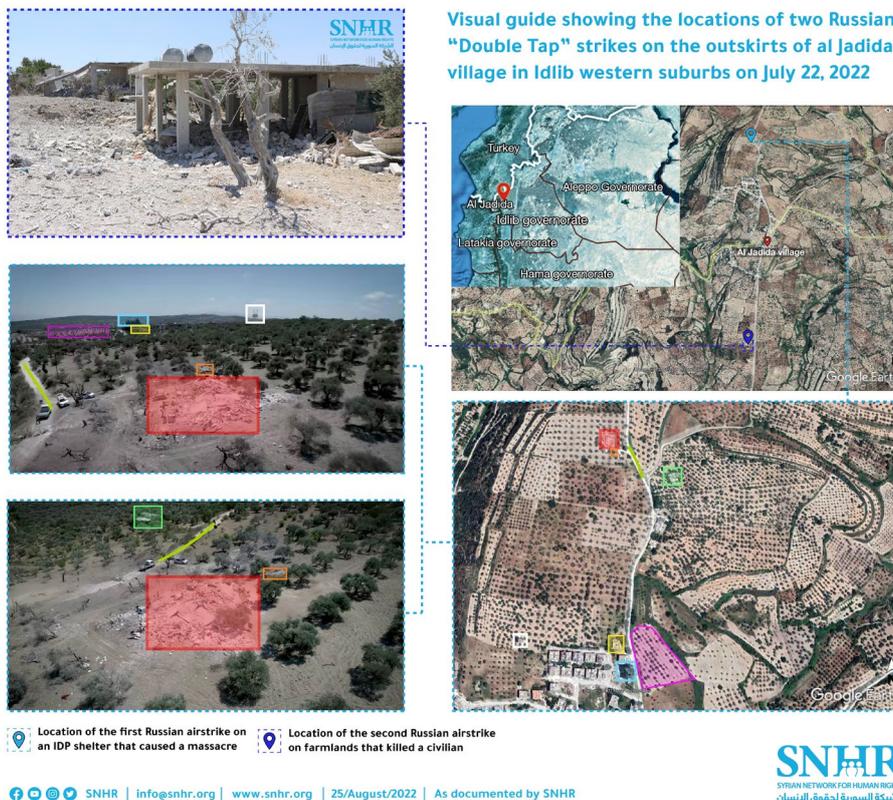
Second location

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 named Ahmad Alwan who was riding a motorcycle along the main road, and caused massive damage to the two houses.

We also spoke with Muhammad Najib al-Jawhar,²¹ 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.”**

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



On August 25, 2022, we released a [special report](#) documenting the attack.

21. Via WhatsApp on July 26, 2022.

On Thursday, September 8, 2022, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched three [missiles](#)’ airstrikes on a mountainous area south of Hafsarja village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles hit a stonemason workshop and houses in its vicinity; resulting in [the deaths of seven civilians](#), including two children, and wounding about 11 others, most of whom were stonemasons. In addition, the airstrike [severely damaged the stonemason workshop and several homes](#), causing massive destruction. Tents for displaced people, located about 200m from the stonemason workshop, were also [damaged by some shrapnel from the bombing](#). The area was under the control of factions of the armed opposition and Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham at the time of the incident.

SNHR spoke with Ahmad al Ahmad²², a media activist from Hafsarja village and a witness of the massacre. He told us that on September 8, at 11:00, the aviation observatories circulated reports that Russian aircrafts had taken off from Hmeimim Airbase in Lattakia suburbs, adding: **“The aircraft carried out three raids on lands and farms about two kilometers from the village - two of them were on my cousin’s stonemason workshop and his house next to it, and the third was carried out by warplanes that were over 200 meters above. After the first raid, I went to the site of the bombing, and when I arrived, I entered the workshop with other men and pulled out a wounded man and two victims, then we moved away a little due to the return of the air force and they bombed the workshop again. After the bombing ended, and the warplanes leaving the airspace, the civil defense teams worked to evacuate the remaining victims and rescue the wounded.”**

Ahmed said that the estimated time between each raid was between 10 to 15 minutes, stating that two missiles were used in the first raid, and three in the second, and added: **“The death toll is seven, including two children, three from Hafsarja village and four from other areas in Idlib, and about 12 people were wounded, some of whom are in a critical condition.”**

2. Targeting medical personnel and medical facilities

We documented no deaths among medical personnel or attacks on medical facilities by forces believed to be Russian in both 2022 and 2021.

22. Via WhatsApp on September 21, 2022

3. Targeting educational facilities

In 2022, we documented no fewer than one attack on educational facilities by forces believed to be Russian, while Russian forces committed no attacks on educational facilities in 2021.

On Friday, April 22, 2022, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian fired missiles at [al-Enkawi High School in al-Enkawi](#) village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, resulting in the partial destruction of the [school building](#). SNHR notes that the school was out of commission at the time on account of most of the village's residents fleeing due to its close proximity to Syrian regime forces. Al-Enkawi village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the incident.

4. Targeting places of worship

We documented no attacks on places of worship by forces believed to be Russian in 2022, while we documented at least one attack on a place of worship by Russian forces in 2021.

5. Targeting media workers

We documented no deaths among media workers at the hands of forces believed to be Russian in 2022, whereas we documented the death of one media worker at the hands of Russian forces in 2021.

6. Use of prohibited weapons

Cluster munitions

We recorded no attacks that involved the use of cluster munitions by Russian forces in 2022, whereas we documented one attack involving the use of cluster munitions by Russian forces in 2021.



Photo of the rising smoke in the aftermath of an airstrike by warplanes believed to be Russian that used missiles to target the western side of Idlib governorate, causing fires in some of the local forests across the area - August 8, 2022 | By: Eyad Badra.

C. ISIS (Self-proclaimed the Islamic State)

The rate of the violations we documented perpetrated by ISIS declined in 2022, as the group lost large swathes of territory after March 2019. Among the most notable violations documented by SNHR that we believe were committed by cells affiliated with ISIS were extrajudicial killings.

Despite the declining rate of ISIS attacks, however, an ongoing issue of great importance that must be highlighted is that of determining the fate of the people forcibly disappeared at the hands of ISIS, which has seen no real progress in years. Even three years since ISIS's downfall in Syria, 8,684 people are still classified as forcibly disappeared by the terrorist group, with their fate remaining unknown to this day. The fate of those victims has still not been revealed, even after ISIS lost its control of all of its detention centers. At the beginning of 2022, SNHR released an extended report entitled, '[The Most Notable ISIS Violations against Syrian Society and ISIS' Contribution to Distorting the Popular Uprising Calling for Freedom and Dignity](#)' outlining the most notable violations by ISIS that we have documented since the group's emergence in April 2013, in an attempt to give a sense of ISIS's catastrophic impact on Syrian society.

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of nine people at the hands of ISIS, with the group also bearing responsibility for one massacre. In 2021, ISIS was responsible for the killing of seven civilians, including two children.

On Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at around 19:00, gunmen believed to be [affiliated with ISIS](#) raided the home of Nouri al-Hmeish, head of the public relations office at the SDF's Civil Deir Ez-Zour Council, in Fnejien village, Badiyah Abu Khashab, in the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour.

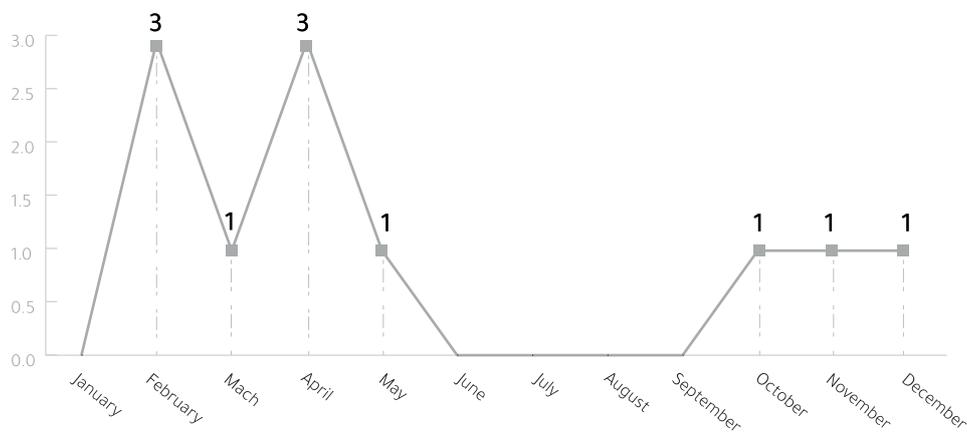
Seven civilians were killed, and five others were injured in the assault. The village was under SDF control at the time of the incident.

D. HTS (an alliance composed Fateh al-Sham Front and armed opposition factions)

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2022, we documented the killing of 11 civilians, including two children and two women by HTS, which was responsible for the killing of 17 civilians, including five children, in 2021.

The graph below shows the distribution of the 17 civilians killed by the HTS in 2022 by month:



- Some of the most notable incidents of extrajudicial killing

On Friday, May 13, 2022, HTS forces fired multiple artillery shells at Nabbel town in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [killing](#) a 12-year-old boy aged Ali Hussein Haj Eisa, and injuring another child. The village was under the control of Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, October 12, 2022, a woman named Fatima Mahmoud al-Abd, from Rasm al-Abd village in east of Idlib governorate, was [killed](#) while some of her family members were wounded in artillery bombardment by HTS forces who fired multiple shells at al-Meyah IDP camp (where the woman resided), located in Burj Abdallo village, to the southeast of Afrin city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The bombardment was part of an HTS offensive, as the group's forces were trying to carry out raids in the villages to provide support for Ferqat al-Hamza and Ferqat al-Sultan Suleiman Shah, two Syrian National Army factions, that were battling al-Failaq al-Thalith, another Syrian National Army faction.

2. Arbitrary arrest/enforced disappearance

In 2022, HTS continued its targeting of activists and workers with humanitarian groups. Most of these arrests were made over the detainees expressing views critical of the HTS's management of its territories, and other allegations such as charges of working with the SDF/international coalition or Syrian regime forces. Arrests are carried out in an arbitrary fashion, in the form of raids, with HTS members breaking down doors in victims' homes, or abducting them in the streets or at temporary checkpoints. Some of the most prominent incidents of arrest we documented at the hands of HTS in 2022 were:

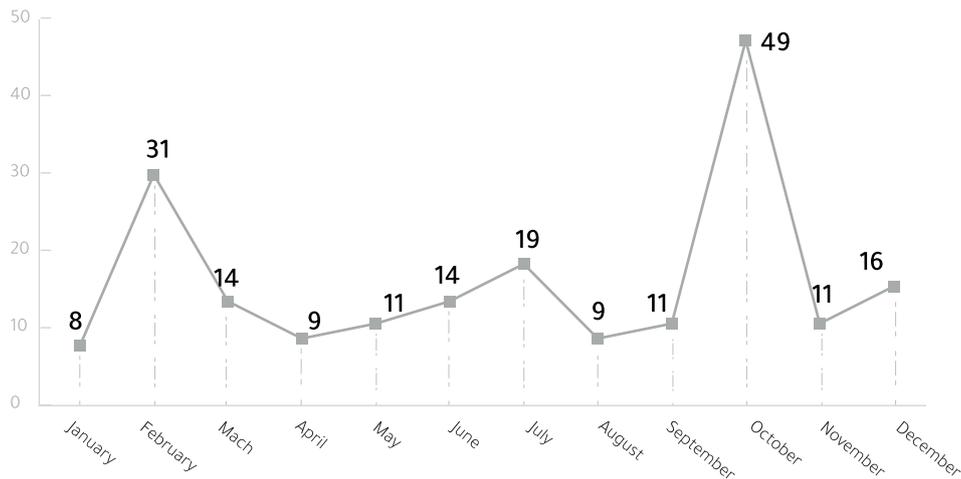
- Arresting members of the Tahrir Party over their criticism of the HTS.
- One incident also saw HTS arresting a group of religious figures inside a center for memorizing the Quran in Idlib city.
- Arresting civilians over their involvement in anti-HTS protests.
- HTS personnel also physically assaulted, then arrested a number of women with their children over accusations of smuggling goods from areas under the control of the SNA into the HTS-controlled western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. These women and children were subsequently released.
- HTS arrested a number of IDPs on the pretext of their refusal to relocate to camps designated for the displaced.
- Additionally, a number of civilians were arrested by the HTS for contacting family members living in regime-controlled areas.
- Furthermore, we documented HTS' arrest of dozens of civilians and SNA servicemen in mass arrests that were concentrated in in Afrin city and number of its affiliated villages in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, following HTS's which saw clashes between the group and SNA factions. Some of those detained in these arrests were released as part of prisoner exchange deals with SNA factions.

Moreover, the HTS-affiliated Salvation Government's Media Directorate summoned a number of media activists over posts published on their social media pages, or their participation in discussions on social media that were critical of HTS' practices. Many of those activists told us that they were forced to apologize and to sign pledges vowing to abstain from critiquing or accusing the HTS, and warned that if they failed to do so they would be prosecuted and tried.

On April 2, 2022, the Salvation's Government Ministry of Justice [issued](#) an amnesty decree that provided a full pardon for any sentences issued on the grounds of the public right, as well as pardoning half the sentence of any prisoners who had received a judicial ruling or similar sentences. As we determined through monitoring the situation, this amnesty decree did not include detainees who were arrested over expressing their views or disagreeing with the HTS, being limited to criminal cases.

In 2022, we documented that HTS arrested no fewer than 202 individuals, including 13 children and three women. Of these, 106 have been released, while 96 of the 202, have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance. Meanwhile, the group arrested no fewer than 121 individuals, including one child, in 2021.

The graph below show the distribution of the arrests made by HTS in 2022 by month:



As shown in the graph, October saw a significant increase in the number of arrests made by HTS, which were carried out in raids on Afrin city and its vicinity in Aleppo northern suburbs following clashes with SNA factions.

- Some of the most notable incidents and cases of arbitrary arrest:

On February 10, 2022, HTS personnel carried out a raid and arrest/detention campaign in the IDP camps of Um al-Shuhada and Sfuhun which is located in the gathering of Atama Camp near Atama village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The campaign followed anti-HTS popular protests which began after an HTS servicemen shot a woman in the head earlier that day near a checkpoint in an area between Deir Ballout, administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, and the Atma area. SNHR documented HTS' arrest of 22 civilians, including one media activist, who also suffered a physical beating. The arrests were accompanied by heavy shooting in the camp. We documented that a number of those detained were released a few hours later.

On Friday, April 15, 2022, HTS personnel detained two women, one of whom was pregnant, and two girls from the same family from Tqad town in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate after physically assaulting them in the Ma'bar al-Ghazawiya area near Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, on charges of smuggling cigarettes from SNA-held areas to the areas of the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, which is under HTS' control. We recorded that the women were released on Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

Mohammad Klal al-Abdou, a 48-year-old pediatrician from Abu Makka village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was detained by HTS personnel on Tuesday, June 7, 2022, near Douar al-Zera'a area in al-Dana city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, while he was returning from his work at al-Hayat Hospital in al-Dana city to his home in Sarmada city in northern Idlib. We documented that he was released on July 12, 2022.



Mohammad Klal al-Abdou

On Monday, September 19, 2022, three children: Ahmed Farhan al Hussein (16), Ahmad (16) and Hamza (10) Hassan al Hussein, from al Khashir village the suburbs of Idlib governorate, were arrested by HTS personnel as they passed through a checkpoint run by the group in Ariha city in the suburbs of Idlib governorate, on charges of possessing suspicious materials that they obtained through their scavenging work. The children were later released on September 21, 2022.

Ahmad Kamal al-Din, a university student studying political science at Free Aleppo University, from Kafr Shlaya village, southern Idlib governorate, was detained by HTS personnel on Monday, October 17, 2022, in the center of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib over his criticism of HTS and some armed opposition factions in comments posted on social media. He was taken to an undisclosed location. On Saturday, October 22, 2022, HTS's General Security Apparatus released a [statement](#) explaining the reasons behind Ahmad's arrest.



Ahmad Kamal al-Din

3. Torture in detention centers

HTS uses various torture methods in its detention centers that are largely similar to those used in the Syrian regime's detention centers. Also worth noting is that the torture strategy used by both parties bear a strong resemblance to each other, with both employing strategies that aim to force a detainee to confess, and then using those coerced confessions, extracted under torture, as evidence in their 'trials'. While we recorded a decline in the numbers of deaths due to torture that we documented at HTS' hands in 2022, it should be noted that torture is still being practiced in HTS' detention centers according to first-hand accounts from former prisoners. Some prisoners even told us they were tortured even before interrogation or were given the choice of accepting the charges leveled at them or suffering torture until they did so.

Furthermore, HTS has devised 22 torture methods that are unique to the group, and those detained by them might experience more than one torture method during their interrogation. We outlined all of these methods of torture in an extensive report entitled, [‘The Most Notable Hay’at Tahrir al Sham Violations Since the Establishment of Jabhat al Nusra to Date’](#).

In 2022, SNHR documented one death to torture and medical negligence in HTS detention centers, while we documented the death of four individuals due to torture and medical negligence, including one child, at the group’s hands in 2021.

Faisal Ahmad al-Jumaa, the Khatib (orator) and imam of a mosque in Darkoush town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, from Shimsha village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1967, was arrested on April 27, 2022, by HTS personnel in Darkoush town over charges of contacting Syrian regime forces. He was taken to al-Zanbaqi Prison in the town. His family last visited him on December 6, 2021, at the town’s police station. On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, HTS informed his family that he had died in an HTS detention center on February 2, 2022, but failed to return his body to them. SNHR can confirm that he was in poor health at the time of his arrest, as his left leg was paralyzed, which makes it highly likely he died due to torture and medical negligence in detention.

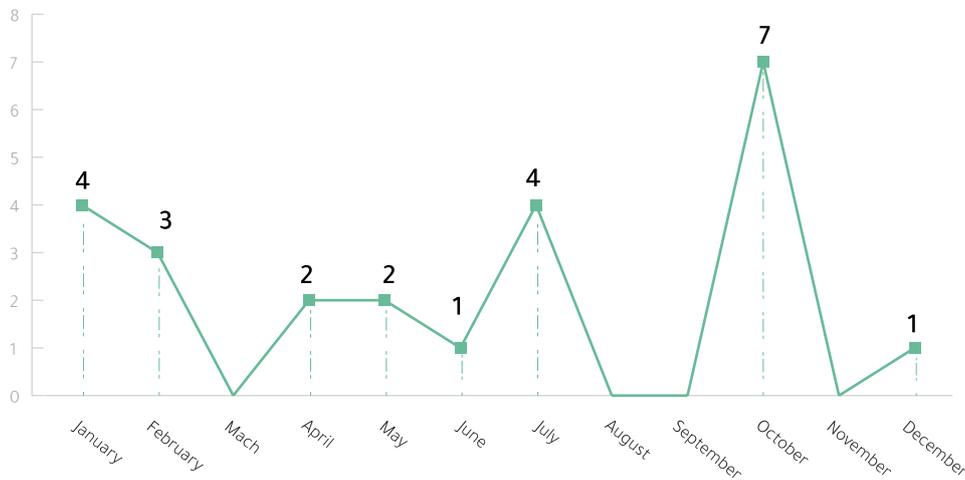


E. All armed opposition factions/SNA

1. Extrajudicial killing

Most of the unlawful acts of killing by the armed opposition factions/SNA occurred during infighting that saw civilians die as collateral damage. The ground-based attacks by these forces on other parties' territories also resulted in civilian deaths, including children and women. In 2022, we documented the killing of 24 civilians, including seven children and five women, at the hands of all armed opposition factions/SNA, while we documented that the same factions were responsible for the killing of 24 civilians, including three children and two women, in 2021.

The graph below shows the distribution of the 24 civilians killed at the hands of all armed opposition factions/SNA in 2022 by month



- Some of the most notable extrajudicial killings

On Monday, May 2, 2022, a man named Bashar Sweidan was [shot dead](#) by servicemen from the Liwa Soqour al-Shamal (Hawks of the North Brigade), an SNA faction, at a checkpoint near Qazlbash village, known as al-Ras al-Ahmar, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The faction attempted to justify the killing by claiming that the victim had failed to stop at the checkpoint.

On Friday, July 22, 2022, personnel from al-Jabha al-Wataniya le al-Tahrir (the National Liberation Front), an armed opposition faction, used a rocket launcher to fire multiple rockets at Nabl al-Khatib village in western Hama governorate, killing two civilians, one of them a woman, and injuring others. The two civilians were named as Sana Hasan Safi and Hamza Amin Ali. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, October 7, 2022, gunmen opened fire at a motorcycle ridden by a media activist, Mohammad Abdullatif, known as Abu Ghanoum, and his pregnant wife, near an area known as Dawwar Furn al-Majles, or Dawwar al-Marouha, on the eastern outskirts of al-Bab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo. Mohammad, his wife, and their unborn child died immediately.

Mohammad, a well-known local activist who came from Bza'a city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, had been living in al-Bab city.

On Monday, October 10, 2022, security officers from al-Failaq al-Thalith, a Syrian National Army faction, pursued and captured individuals suspected to have been involved in the assassination of Mohammad Abu Ghanoum. Subsequently, Ferqat al-Hamza, another Syrian National Army faction, confirmed, in a [statement](#) released on October 10, 2022, that the cell which carried out the assassination of Mohammad Abu Ghanoum and his wife is affiliated with the group. Ferqat al-Hamza announced in the same statement that it would sever ties with anyone who should be proven to be involved in this crime.



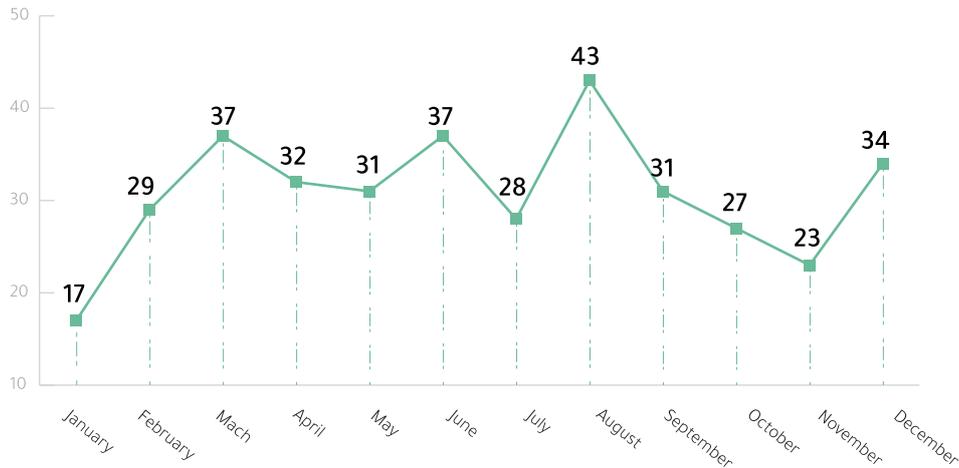
Mohammad Abdullatif
Abu Ghanoum

1. Arbitrary arrest/detention center

In 2022, all armed opposition factions/SNA also continued carrying out arbitrary mass detentions and abductions that did not exclude women and children, with most of these taking place on a mass scale. These detentions primarily targeted people coming from the regime's territories on the pretext of vetting them. The detainees arrested in this context were held without being officially charged or tried for periods varying from several weeks to several months on average. We also documented detentions of an ethnic character being carried out by the armed opposition, which were concentrated in the territories under their control in Aleppo governorate. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the sole legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions through the judiciary, with these arrests also carried out without presenting any clear charges against those detained. We also documented raids and detentions carried out by SNA servicemen, targeting civilians, including women and village mukhtars [headmen], on charges of collaborating with the SDF, as well as over the detainees' criticism of the poor living conditions and corruption in the SNA's territories. Furthermore, we documented raids and detentions by the SNA targeting civilians, including women, who took part in the festivities celebrating Nowruz on March 20, 2022. We also documented the arrests of dozens of civilians over their participation in the demonstrations held on the Friday of 'Lan Nusaleh' (We Shall Not Make Peace) in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, in August 2022.

In 2022, SNHR documented that all armed opposition factions/SNA arrested no fewer than 369 individuals, including four children and 28 women. Of these, 142 have been released, while 227 of the 369, have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance. Meanwhile, the same forces were responsible for the detention of 420 individuals, including six children and 47 women, in 2022.

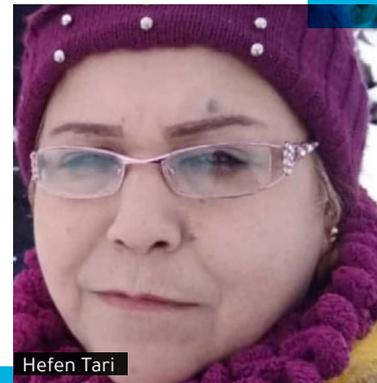
The graph below shows the distribution of the 369 arrests made by all armed opposition factions/SNA in 2022 by month



As the chart shows, August saw a significant increase in the number of arbitrary arrests; this was due to mass arrests carried out by armed opposition factions/SNA that targeted dozens of civilians over their participation in demonstrations held on the Friday of 'Lan Nusaleh' (We Shall Not Make Peace) in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

- Most notable incidents and cases of arbitrary detention

Hefen Tari, a 47-year-old woman from Jaqla village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in northwestern Aleppo governorate, who lives in Afrin city, was arrested on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, by SNA servicemen at her home in the city and taken to an undisclosed location. On March 7, 2022, SNA servicemen arrested her 19-year-old son, Mohammad Nathmi Na'san. While we documented that Hefen was released on Thursday, April 7, 2022, the fate of her son remains unknown.



Hefen Tari

On Sunday, May 15, 2022, SNA servicemen carried out a raid and arrest/detention campaign in Darkerah village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of three civilians, including an elderly person, over charges of collaborating with the SDF. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Loay al-Younes, a man born in 1989 from Deir B'alba neighborhood in Homs city, who's currently living in Jandeiras town in the southwestern suburbs of Afrin city in the northwest of Aleppo governorate, was arrested/detained by personnel from the Syrian National Army's Military Police force on Friday, August 5, 2022, in a raid on his home in the town, and taken to the town's Military Police Headquarters. We documented his release on Monday, August 8, 2022.

Loay is a media activist and member of the Association of Revolution Activists in Homs, who previously worked with al Jisr TV channel and studied at al Baath University' Architecture faculty in Homs city.



Loay al-Younes

Radwan Muhammad Barri, from Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested/detained by police personnel affiliated with the General Staff of the Syrian National Army on Saturday, August 13, 2022, in Izaz city, due to his participation in demonstrations on the Friday named by local activists as the Friday of 'We Shall Not Make Peace' in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. We recorded that he was released on September 3, 2022.

Ramzi Ramzi Kilo, a 16-year-old boy, from Arnada village near Afrin city in northern Aleppo governorate, was assaulted, then arrested, by Syrian National Army police personnel on Sunday, August 14, 2022, in a raid on his family's home in Sourka village of Afrin city. He was taken to an undisclosed location. We documented that he was released on November 13, 2022.



Ramzi Ramzi Kilo

Mahmoud and Mohammad Ibrahim Kollo Khiri, two brothers, from Burj Haidar village, affiliated with Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, were arrested/detained on Monday, October 10, 2022, by servicemen from the Syrian National Army's Failaq al-Sham division in a raid on Burj Haidar, over accusations of collaborating with the SDF. We documented that the brothers were released on October 19, 2022.

3. Torture in detention centers

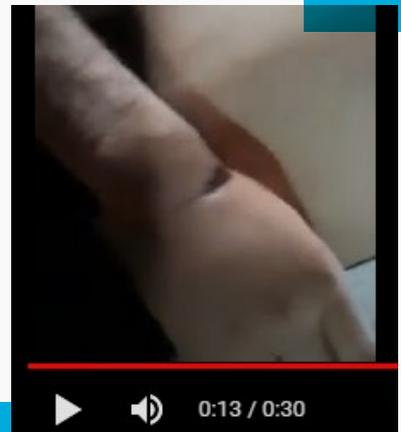
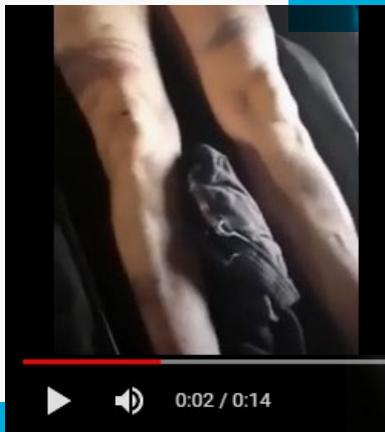
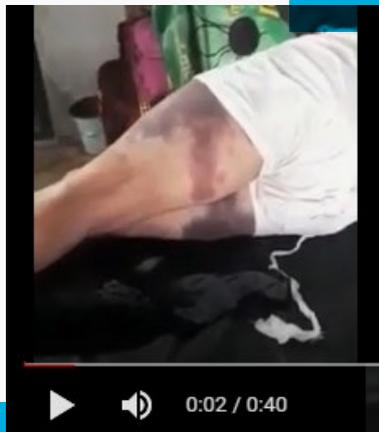
In 2022, we noticed that armed opposition factions/SNA continued their torture practices in their detention centers, which targeted civilians over matters related to freedom of expression and on various charges. We have released [numerous statements](#) condemning incidents in which civilians were subjected to torture at the hands of armed opposition servicemen in areas under their control, mainly in the northern suburbs of Aleppo.

In 2022, SNHR documented that at least three individuals died due to torture and medical negligence in the detention centers of all armed opposition factions/SNA, while the same forces were responsible for the death of five individuals due to torture, including one woman, in 2021.

[Abdul Razzaq Tarrad al Abeid](#), a car salesman from M'arzaf village in the suburbs of Hama governorate, was living in Jalma village of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate when he was arrested by personnel from Failaq al Sham, a faction of the SNA, on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at his home in Jalma village, and taken to an SNA detention center in Jandreis town near Afrin city, where he was tortured to death. On Friday, February 25, 2022, Abdul Razzaq's family was informed by a member of Failaq al Sham of Abdul Razzaq's death, with his body being released to the family from the place where he had been detained in Jandreis town. Failaq al-Sham released [a statement](#) on the same day condemning the killing of Abdul Razzaq.

SNHR spoke with Mr. Firas,²³ a relative of the victim, Abdul Razzaq, who said: "Abdul Razzaq left his house in Jalma village on Thursday morning, heading to his workplace at the car showroom he owned in Jandreis town. He was scheduled to visit his children, who live in Jandreis town, where they study, but he did not go, and when his family called his mobile phone, it was turned off at the time. They waited for him until the evening before they informed the police, who circulated his name to the hospitals and the checkpoints, finding that he was being detained by the security apparatus of Failaq al Sham faction, who told his family that they had taken him for investigation and that he would be released the next morning, after which they called the family and requested the presence of his brother, telling him subsequently that Abdul Razzaq had died as a result of a heart attack, with his brother receiving the body at 3 a.m. on Friday morning. In Atma Hospital, his body was examined by the forensic doctor, who told his family that he had died as a result of severe torture and electrocution."

On Friday, February 25, SNHR received [a number of photos](#) and videos which clearly show and confirm that Abdul Razzaq was subjected to brutal torture. We released [a statement](#) the same day condemning the incident.



Videos showing signs of torture on the dead body of Abdul Razzaq al-Abeid who died due to torture on February 25, 2022, at a Failq al-Sham detention center in Jandreis town, Aleppo suburbs

23. Via phone on February 26, 2022.

F. Kurdish-Led SFD (PYD)

In July 2012, forces affiliated with the Kurdish Democratic Union party emerged and began to spread and take control of territory across areas of Syria. Subsequently, the party and its forces joined the Kurdish Self-Management forces, which were established in January 2014. At the request of the US-led coalition against ISIS, and in particular the US Administration, the PYD Party went through an ostensible change process on October 10, 2015, by incorporating some personnel from Arab and Assyrian backgrounds, in order to announce the launch of what was renamed the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which were able, with the help of the US-led coalition, to take control of the northeastern region of Syria.

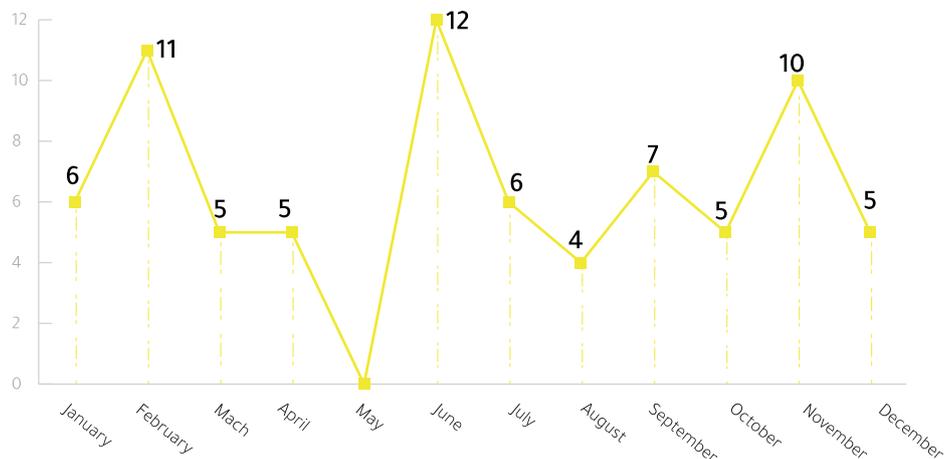
Since its foundation, the SDF has regularly carried out indiscriminate bombardment targeting areas outside its control. The SDF has also engaged in clashes in populated areas. We have recorded numerous incidents in which SDF servicemen have opened fire randomly from checkpoints, at markets, or during raids. Furthermore, we've documented civilian deaths at the hands of snipers for which the SDF was responsible, in addition to summary and arbitrary executions carried out by SDF personnel in areas over which the group had gained control.

Despite the changes these forces have witnessed, there has been no change in the SDF's policy towards the management of the areas under its control, with SDF personnel continuing to commit grave violations against civilians, ranging from killings to arrests, torture, sieges and forced conscription. The SDF has also imposed restrictions on the residents of areas under the group's control and deprived them of freedom of expression and freedom of movement through the establishment of military posts within areas of SDF control or on the borders separating these from areas under the control of other forces.

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2022, SNHR documented the killing of 76 civilians, including 11 children and six women (adult female), at the hands of the SDF, which was also responsible for one massacre in the same period. Meanwhile, the SDF was responsible for the killing of no fewer than 75 civilians, including 11 children and two women (adult female), and committed one massacre in 2021.

The graph below shows the distribution of the 76 civilians killed at the hands of SDF in 2022 by month



- Some of the most notable extrajudicial killings

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, SDF personnel used a rocket launcher to target a busy vital area known as Future Square in Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, killing two [civilians Saed Jehad al-Haji and Akram al-Hasan](#), both second-year students at Free Aleppo University's department of mechatronics engineering. The area was under the control of the SNA at the time of the incident.

Saed, who was 21 years old at the time of his death, came from Byanon village in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, while Akram al-Hasan came from al-Nayrab village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib.

On Sunday, March 27, 2022, we documented the killing [of Kamal Ali al-Mehmad](#) from al-Shyoukh village in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo by an SDF sniper. Kamal was shot dead while he was fishing on the banks of the Euphrates River in Jarablos city, eastern Aleppo suburbs. The area was under the control of the SNA at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, June 1, 2022, SDF personnel stationed in Ein Eisa city, northern Raqqa, used a rocket launcher to target the market in Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, [killing three civilians](#), including two siblings (Wasim and Bashar al-Barhou al-Hasraji and Khaled Jasim al-Hleisi), and injuring around 10 others.

On Thursday, June 9, 2022, [Amjad Mohammad Fateh Abeid al-Akla, a 17-year-old boy](#) who was a high school student from al-Shnan village in eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was shot dead by SDF servicemen who opened fire at the group of students he was in as they were passing near the river crossing in Theyban town in eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate on their way home from school.

On Thursday, June 9, 2022, Hamed al-Nasser, the imam of a mosque in al-Atala village, administratively a part of al-Shaddadi city in southern Hasaka governorate, was [shot dead](#) by SDF servicemen in a raid on his home in al-Atala village.

2. Arbitrary arrest/enforced disappearance

In 2022, SDF personnel continued their policies of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance which did not exclude women and children. This year also saw an increase in the number of detentions and enforced disappearances of children carried out by the SDF compared to 2021, with these arrests carried out in raids and mass detentions targeting civilians, activists, politicians, students, teachers, and workers at some of the SDF's own institutions. Most of the SDF's raids and detentions are accompanied by random indiscriminate gunfire, as well as physical beatings of civilians, and breaking into and looting homes. Some of these arrests were carried out on the pretext of combating ISIS, with international coalition forces taking part in some of these operations.

In early-2022, SDF personnel carried out random detention campaigns involving a number of civilians in Hasaka city following the events in Ghwayran Prison on January 20, 2022, in Hasaka city, when dozens of detainees escaped.

We also documented the SDF's arrest of members of the Yekiti Party of Kurdistan (PYKS), with some being released after suffering brutal beating in Hasaka city. Others were arrested by the SDF over accusations of collaborating with Syrian regime forces. Meanwhile, the SDF also targeted individuals over their familial relation to activists, armed opposition fighters, or wanted fugitives in an attempt to use them to put pressure on these figures' families, with these victims taken to undisclosed locations.

Additionally, a number of civilian medical workers were arrested by SDF personnel in a raid on al-Resala Hospital in Theyban city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate over accusations of providing shelter for armed individuals inside the hospital.

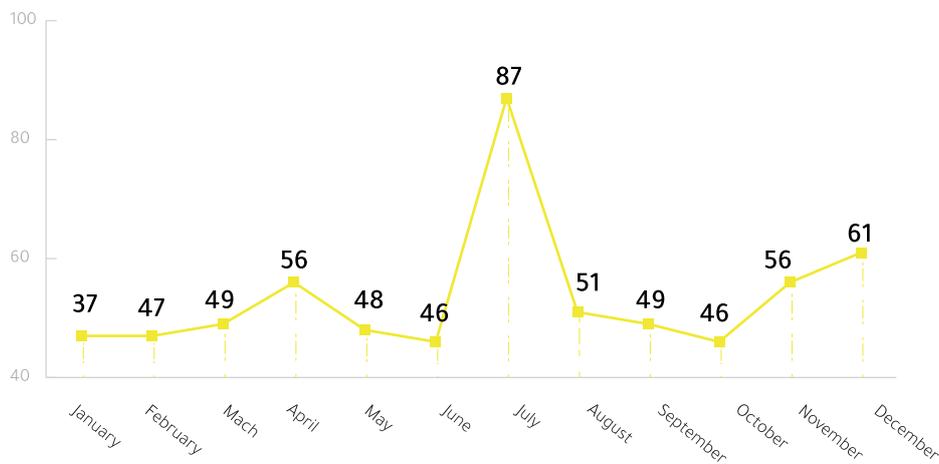
Furthermore, we documented detentions of civilians by SDF personnel over their participation in anti-SDF demonstrations protesting against the poor living and service conditions in the areas under SDF control. Other civilians, including teachers, were arrested for taking part in protests that criticized the curriculum adopted by the SDF at schools in its territories in place of the curriculum of the Syrian regime's Ministry of Education.

The SDF also carried out arrests targeting civilians, including university students, as part of larger campaigns of raids and mass arrests, as well as at checkpoints, in order to take them to military recruitment camps. Those arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa.

SDF personnel also continue to abduct children for the purpose of military conscription, taking these children to training and recruitment camps where they are not allowed to contact their families, who have no way to obtain any knowledge of their children's fate.

In 2022, SNHR documented that the SDF arrested no fewer than 633 individuals, including 93 children and 10 women. Of these, 129 were subsequently released, mostly as part of understandings with local tribes, while 504 of the 633, have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance, SDF personnel were responsible for the arrest of at least 645 individuals, including 59 children and seven women, in 2021. It should be noted that some of the arrests exhibited an ethnic character.

The graph below shows the distribution of the 633 cases of arrest/detention at the hands of SDF in 2022 by year



As the graphs shows, July and December both saw a significant rise in the number of cases of detention at the hands of SDF, which is due to mass arrests carried out by the group targeting civilians in their territories to take them to their recruitment camps, while other detentions were carried out over criticizing the living and service situation in SDF's areas of control.

- Mos totable incidents and cases of arrest

On Sunday, January 9, 2022, SDF carried out a raid and arrest/detention campaign in al-Suwaydia Kabira village, which is administratively a part of al-Tabaqa area in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate in response to an anti-SDF demonstration condemning the living and service situation in the SDF's territories. SNHR documented the arrest of nine civilians who were taken to an undisclosed location. The campaign was accompanied by gunfire at the protesters.

Sabri Mohammad Fakhri and Bawar Malla Ahmad, from al-Qameshli city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, were arrested on February 5, 2022, by SDF personnel in a raid on their home in al-Qameshli city. We documented that Bawar Malla Ahmad was released on February 9, 2022, and that Sabri Mohammad Fakhri was released on Friday, April 15, 2022.



Sabri Mohammad Fakhri

Bawar Malla Ahmad

Sabri Mohammad Fakhri is a reporter for ARKTV Agency and a member of the Regional Committee of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria.

Bawar Malla Ahmad is a reporter for the website Yekiti Media and member of the PYKS.

On Friday, March 25, 2022, SDF personnel carried out a raid and arrest operation in Darnaj village, which is administratively a part of the Nahiyat Theyban in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, in response to an anti-SDF demonstration condemning the living and service situation in the SDF's territories. SNHR documented that four civilians were arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. The operation involved burning some of the civilians' houses in the village.



A civilian's house that was burned by SDF personnel

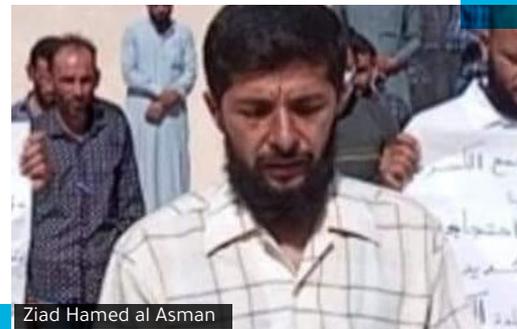
Omar Ahmad al-Fneish, from al Sh-heil city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was detained by fighters affiliated with the SDF on Friday, April 22, 2022, while he was passing through one of the SDF's checkpoints in al Sh-heil city, and was taken to an undisclosed location. It should be noted that that Omar had only recently returned from Turkey to al Sh-heil city to visit his family when he was arrested.



Hatem al-Madloul, from Abu Hammam city, which is administratively a part of al-Sh`aitat area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested on Tuesday, June 14, 2022, by SDF personnel over his TV appearance on Syria TV on June 12, 2022, in which he talked about the SDF's destruction of houses in al-Muh neighborhood of Abu Hammam city. We documented that he was released on July 3, 2022.



Ziad Hamed al Asman, a teacher, from al Bal'oom neighborhood of al Mayadeen city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by SDF personnel on Saturday, September 24, 2022, in a raid on his residence in al Kubr village in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, over his participation in a peaceful sit-in demonstration in the village on September 22, 2022, held to protest against the educational curriculum imposed by the SDF in its areas of control. He was taken to an unknown destination.



On Saturday, November 5, 2022, SDF personnel carried out an arrest/detention campaign in a random IDP camp in Tal al-Samn village, northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of five civilians over charges of cooperating with the SNA. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Photos of former prisoners released by the SDF demonstrating the effects of the blatant medical negligence in their detention centers.

[Jendar Barakat](#), from al-Hasaka city, born in 1988, is a member of the PYKS in Syria and a former political prisoner once detained by the Assad regime, who now works at a currency exchange office. He was arrested on Tuesday, January 18, 2022, by SDF personnel in a raid on his place of work in al-Mufti neighborhood of al-Hasaka city, and released a few hours later with signs of torture on his body.



Photos showing the signs of torture on Jendar Barakat's body



Video footage showing the moment of Jendar Barakat's arrest by the SDF from his place of work



3. Torture in detention centers

In both 2022 and 2021, we noticed a significant rise in the number of victims who died due to torture at the hands of the SDF. Indeed, this is evidenced by the fact that the group has returned some of its victims' bodies to their families with signs of torture.

The SDF has used torture in its detention centers against detainees and abductees as a mean to extract confession. In many cases, the torture has been marked by a vengeful and ethnic character. While the methods of torture used by the SDF are varied, they are largely similar to those used by Syrian regime forces. According to the accounts we have collected, the SDF's detention centers are heavily overcrowded with prisoners who are held under extremely poor conditions in terms of health, sanitation, and food.

In 2022, SNHR documented that 14 individuals had died due to torture and medical negligence at the hands of the SDF, while 15 individuals died due to torture at the group's hands in 2021.

It should be noted that the SDF holds tens of thousands of Syrian citizens in al-Hol Campaign in the desert, along with thousand others from other nationalities, on no legal grounds and without presenting any judicial warrants, with most having been held in the camp for years. Indeed, the harsh detention conditions, as well as the living situation that entails lack of food and medical care embody various forms of psychological and physical torture.

Tareq Sayid Ahmad, an SDF member from Khanak village, which is administratively affiliated with Ein al-Arab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was 29 at the time of his arrest by other SDF personnel in August 2021 as he was returning from a security-related mission in the SNA-controlled Jarablos area. He has been classified as forcibly disappeared ever since, with nobody being allowed to visit him or know his fate. On Monday, April 18, 2022, an SDF officer notified Tareq's family that he had died in an SDF detention center, with the group returning his body to his family. SNHR can confirm he was in good health at the time of his arrest, which makes it highly likely that he died due to torture and medical negligence in an SDF detention center.

Diyar Khalil Omar, a former employee of the SDF's Culture and Art Administration, from Basouta village of Afrin city in northern Aleppo governorate, was 19 years old and living in al Sheikh Maqsood neighborhood in Aleppo city at the time of his arrest by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) personnel on August 14, 2022. He was detained, without any court warrant being issued, after being summoned to the SDF's National Security Office in al Sheikh Maqsood neighborhood, and was taken to an SDF detention center. He wasn't allowed to contact his family or a lawyer.

On September 3, 2022, an SDF member notified Diyar's family of his death in custody. Upon visiting the SDF headquarters, Diyar's family members received a medical report which stated that he had died on August 31, 2022 due to lack of oxygen. His body, which was returned to his family from the detention center where he was imprisoned in al Sheikh Maqsood neighborhood, bore various marks indicating he'd been subjected to severe torture.



Diyar Khalil Omar

SNHR received several photos on September 4, 2022, clearly showing that the victim, Diyar Khalil Omar, had been brutally tortured. We released [a statement](#) condemning the incident.

4. Protected persons and objects

A. Medical sector

In 2022, we recorded no fewer than two attacks on medical facilities at the hands of the SDF, while 2021 saw two attacks by the group.

On Sunday, February 27, 2022, SDF personnel opened fire using a heavy 23 mm machine gun at Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. [One of the bullets hit Izaz National Hospital on the Afrin-Izaz Public Road](#) on the northwestern outskirts of the city, injuring a civilian patient and shattering some of the hospital's glass windowpanes. Izaz city was under the control of the SNA at the time of the incident.

We also documented the SDF's detention of a number of medical personnel in 2022. Some of these arrests were carried out during raids on medical facilities. In this context, we documented no fewer than seven detentions of medical personnel at the SDF's hands.

Mohammad al-Husseini, a doctor from Damascus city, who was working at al-Kendi Hospital in al-Tayyana village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, and living in the village, was arrested on Sunday, November 13, 2022, along with his brother Osama, while they were in the hospital. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

B. Educational sector

In 2022, we documented no fewer than five attacks on educational facilities by the SDF, while the group was responsible for one attack on an educational facility in 2021.

On Monday, April 18, 2022, SDF personnel raided the Euphrates School for Elementary Education in Mazra'et al-Yarmouk village in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, taking over the school and repurposing it as a military point within the village. SNHR notes that the school was operative before it was turned into a military point. The village was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, August 3, 2022, SDF used a missile launcher to fire several missiles at residential neighborhoods of [Izaz city](#) north of Aleppo governorate. One of the missiles hit an area adjacent to al Andalus Elementary School, southwest of the city, wounding five civilians and causing moderate material damage to the school perimeter wall. The city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

G. Other parties

SNHR's documentation of the violations taking place in Syria in 2022 includes a range of classifications, such as victims killed in bombings whose perpetrators we have been unable to identify, victims who were killed by gunfire whose source SNHR has been unable to identify, victims killed by landmines and shells whose source SNHR has been unable to identify, victims killed by parties SNHR has been unable to identify, victims who drowned, and victims who were killed by Jordanian, Lebanese or Turkish border guard. Under this umbrella category, SNHR documented the killing of 724 civilians; including 193 children, 73 women (adult female), one media worker, and six medical personnel, in 2022, in addition to documenting six massacres by other parties. In 2021, meanwhile, a total of 820 civilians; including 178 children, 91 women (adult female), six medical personnel, and two victims who died due to torture, were killed in 2021 at the hand of other parties, with no fewer than 10 massacres also committed by other parties.

In addition, the bombings and attacks by forces in this category resulted in approximately 37 attacks on civilian vital facilities in 2022, including three on medical facilities and five on educational facilities. Meanwhile, 2021 saw approximately 34 attacks on vital civilian facilities by other parties, including two attacks on medical facilities and three attacks on educational facilities.

- Some of the most notable killings

On Tuesday, January 11, 2022, [Dr. Abd Mufdi Ahmad al-Abd](#) was shot dead by gunmen we have not been able to identify near his place of work at [al-Kendi Hospital](#) in al-Tayyana town, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

Abd Mufdi Ahm al-Abd was a 37-year-old general surgeon from al-Salehiya town in the northern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour.

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, Wasim Mohammad al-Hamad, a nurse, was shot dead by gunmen we have not been able to identify as he was [driving his car along the Damascus-Daraa Highway](#), known as 'al-Ghariya al-Sharqiya-al-Msaifra road' in eastern Daraa governorate.

The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

[Wasim Mohammad al-Hamad](#), who worked as a nurse in Bosra al-Sham Hospital in eastern Daraa governorate, came from Mahajja town in the northern suburbs of Daraa.



On Tuesday, March 1, 2022, a landmine, whose source we have not been able to identify, exploded in agricultural lands in southern al-Mahsnali village in Manbej suburbs in the eastern Aleppo suburbs, killing two children, [Mohammad and Loay al-Awwad](#), both from al-Jard village in eastern Aleppo suburbs, and injuring three others. The children were herding sheep in the area, which was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, March 17, 2022, Hamdi al-Aqlda, an engineer who was the head of the municipal council of Jasim city in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was shot dead by gunmen we have not yet been able to identify in front of his home in Jasim city, which was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, August 19, 2022, at around 10:40 a.m., a missile launcher, positioned in an area controlled jointly by Syrian regime forces and Syrian Democratic Forces, fired around six missiles, targeting al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo; according to information received by SNHR, the missile launcher was located in Sha'ala village, to the west of al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo. Sha'ala village is under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces, with regime forces and Iranian militias also spread around the Sha'ala radar facility. One of the missiles landed in the middle of a public road - the ['al-Khamis Local Market'](#) in the eastern neighborhood of al Bab city, which was crowded with civilians and vendors' stalls at the time. That missile landed directly in front of the 'Falafel Abu al Khair' shop, while the other missiles hit locations adjacent to [the market](#), including the 'Erzurum' School in al Yamani neighborhood,

and a students' accommodation building housing female students. The SNHR has so far been unable to identify the perpetrators of the shelling which [resulted in a massacre](#), though we believe that the missiles were fired either by Syrian regime forces or by the SDF, since the shelling came from an area jointly controlled by both. Investigations are underway to determine the party responsible for the attack, with SNHR documenting the [resulting deaths](#) of 15 civilians, including six children, and the injury of over 30 others, including at least 11 children.



We spoke with Sharif Damkhali,²⁴ a media activist, who headed to the site following the attack. He told us:

“When the shelling began, I went directly to the place of the bombing. On my way to the place, I saw victims being taken by civilians to al Fateh Hospital for Gynecology and to al Majed Hospital.”

Sharif described the place where the rocket landed as a crowded area. “One of the rockets landed near a Falafel place and in an area where street vendors sell vegetables, bread, and other supplies.” He added that the six rockets landed near each other. **“Civil Defense personnel went to retrieve the victims. I also saw police officers who contributed to taking the victims to the hospital and helping them as well.”**

The next day, August 20, al-Bab city witnessed a general strike mourning the deaths of the victims.

24. Via WhatsApp on August 20, 2022.

On Saturday, November 19, 2022, media activist Isam Hassan Abdullah was killed in an airstrike by fixed-wing Turkish warplanes that fired missiles targeting Taql Baql village, administratively affiliated with Nahiyat al-Malikiya in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, which was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

Isam was a 39-year-old reporter working for Hawar News Agency in Hasaka governorate at the time of his death. He originally came from Abra village, administratively affiliated with Nahyat al-Jawwadiya in the northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, and had studied Arabic language at university.



Isam Hassan Abdullah

- Some of the most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities

On Thursday, January 20, 2022, Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate was targeted with multiple rockets whose source we have not yet been able to identify. SNHR suspects the perpetrators were either Syrian regime forces or the SDF since the shelling came from the direction of areas under their control.

One of the rockets landed on al-Itihad al-Arabi School, which is composed of two buildings surrounded by one fence, in al-Filat Street in Afrin city, partially destroying one of the school buildings, and moderately damaging its interior furnishing. Afrin city was under the control of the the SNA at the time of the incident.



Destruction resulting from a ground-based attack whose source we have not yet been able to identify on al-Itihad al-Arabi School in Afrin city, Aleppo - January 20, 2022

On Tuesday, March 1, 2022, an IED whose source we have not yet been able to identify exploded near the [National Hospital](#) on 23 February Street in the middle of Raqqa city, slightly damaging the hospital's perimeter fence. Raqqa city was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, April 9, 2022, at around 01:00, masked gunmen who we have not yet been able to identify, who were riding a motorcycle, threw an IED and opened fire at the health clinic affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), moderately damaging the building. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On April 14, the UNRWA released [a statement](#) on its official website condemning the attack on the health clinic in Daraa Camp.

On Wednesday, June 22, 2022, an IED whose source we have not yet been able to identify exploded near al-Hasan Bakery in the middle of the public road in al-Shaddadi city in the southern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, slightly damaging the bakery's front. The city was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, 19 July 2022, an IED whose source we have not yet been able to identify exploded in the [Abbarat al-Haj Wasfi Market](#), a covered market in Ras al-Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, injuring five civilians. In addition, the explosion also caused a number of fires to break out in numerous shops in the market, whose facilities were moderately damaged by the blast. Ras al-Ein city was under the control of the SNA at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, September 15, 2022, Uleshli village near al-Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was subjected to bombardment by heavy machine guns. SNHR has been unable to determine the perpetrators of this attack to date, and we believe that it was carried out by either Syrian regime forces or the SDF, since the bombardment originated from areas under their control.

This bombardment hit the Omar bin al-Khattab Mosque in the village, wounding the imam of the mosque and causing moderate damages to the mosque building. The village was under the control of the SNA at the time of the incident.



Damages in the aftermath of a ground-based attack whose source we have not been able to identify on Omar bin al-Khattab Mosque in Uleshli village, Aleppo - September 15, 2022

On Tuesday, November 22, 2022, artillery forces believed to be affiliated with Turkish forces, stationed on Turkish territory, fired shells at the Kouran Elementary School, which is controlled by the Education Administration in the Euphrates Region, in [Kouran](#) village, east of Ein al-Arab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo. [The school building was completely destroyed and put out of commission by the attack.](#) The village was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident. It should be noted that the SDF uses a building adjacent to the school as a military base, with the military base also being shelled by Turkish forces who failed to respect the principle of distinction,²⁵ resulting in damage to a vital civilian facility.

25. "The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives. Attacks may only be directed against military objectives. Attacks must not be directed against civilian objects." International Committee of the Red Cross, Rule 7 of the customary international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule7>

V. Most Notable Events We Followed in 2022

On Tuesday, June 28, 2022, the UN Human Rights Office published a report noting that at least 306,887 civilians were killed between the start of the popular uprising in March 2011 and March 31, 2021. Of these, 27,126 were children and 26,727 were females. The report adds that Aleppo governorate saw the largest percentage of deaths, followed by Damascus suburbs governorate, then Homs, then Idlib, and then Hama, stressing that a total of 1.5 percent of the total Syrian population have been killed since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011.

"These are the people killed as a direct result of war operations." [Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said](#). "This does not include the many, many more civilians who died due to the loss of access to healthcare, to food, to clean water and other essential human rights, which remain to be assessed."

It should be noted that SNHR has shared all the victim data it has documented with the OHCHR over the past 11 years, as we believe that the OHCHR plays a fundamental role in serving the issue of the victims that have been killed in Syria. given the agency's ability to confront decision-makers in the permanent Member States of the Security Council regarding this issue. The agency has the power to repeatedly demand that the bloodbath is ended, that the perpetrators are held accountable, and that serious steps are taken to bring about a resolution of the armed conflict which has left this unimaginably massive number of civilian victims.

On Sunday, September 18, 2022, areas of Syria under the Syrian regime's sole control witnessed regime-run elections for local administration councils; these were held in implementation of the requirements of Presidential Decree No. 216 of 2022,²⁶ and in implementation of the provisions of the Local Administration Law promulgated by an earlier Legislative Decree and its amendment No. 107 of 2011, as well as based on the provisions of the General Elections Law and its amendments No. 5 of 2014. According to the state-run [Syrian Arab News Agency \(SANA\)](#), "the number of electoral centers reached 7,348, distributed across all regions, cities and towns", with 59,498 candidates competing for 19,086 seats, within 1,470 administrative units distributed over 14 governorates, 158 cities, 572 towns and 726 municipalities. The Syrian regime celebrated these elections, with the regime's foreign minister referring to them in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly.

The Syrian regime gives importance to these elections in its attempt to confirm the idea of its continuing presence by exercising constitutional functions and conducting elections in a timely manner, in an effort to validate the concept of its victory in the eyes of its supporters. The Syrian regime has created [26 new administrative units](#) whose administrations were included in the elections, allowing the regime to offer more positions to its loyalists, despite being aware that these new administrative units provide no benefit to citizens.

26. Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). (2022, August 3). al-Ra'īs al-Asad yaşdurur mrsrwan bi-taḥdīd al-thāmin 'ashar min Aylūl al-Muqbil mw'dan l'jrā' intikhāb a'dā' al-majālis al-Maḥallīyah [President Assad issues a decree that names September 18 as the date for the election of local council members]. SANA. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.sana.sy/?p=1710222>

In addition, the Syrian regime uses the elected members of the local administration to manage local development and reconstruction projects, using powers, granted to them by laws, such as Local Administration Decree No. 107 of 2011 and Law 10 of 2018,²⁷ which are so extensive that these officials will be allowed to formulate the reconstruction projects that the Syrian regime intends to carry out; these members will be granted these powers in this process because both Decree 66 of 2012²⁸ and Law 10 of 2018 give members of the local administration many discretionary powers, such as deciding on the landlords for properties to be expropriated by the regime, studying objections and receiving ownership confirmation documents from the landlords of houses and properties, and even forming committees authorized to determine the value of land and to decide on granting alternative housing. In this context these elected members have the power to control and apply the policies of the central authority; thus, through these elections, the Syrian regime will turn the city and town councils into tools to implement its own demolition plans, decide on planning issues, issue new regulatory schemes and implement real estate laws aimed at carrying out demographic change.

We, at SNHR, have definitively concluded that the regime's elections have no legitimacy or legality, since they violate a wide range of the principles of both election law and international human rights law. Furthermore, such elections are held as the Syrian regime continues committing many violations in its territories such as arbitrary arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance, to such a degree that they qualify as crimes against humanity. It is also important to remember that elections like those last September are taking place in a specific region of Syria, with new governorates now outside the regime's control and over half of the Syrian people still displaced, either internally or abroad. On October 13, we released a report entitled, ['The Local Administration Elections Held by the Syrian Regime are Illegitimate and do not Represent the Will or Uphold the Rights of the Syrian People'](#) in which we detailed six main factors upon which we based our description of the elections as "illegitimate".

In Southern Syria, protesters held a demonstration on December 4 in Suwayda city condemning the poor living conditions, with some protesters called for the ousting of the regime. On arriving at the building housing the governorate administration, which is affiliated with the Syrian regime government, the protesters were confronted by regime troops firing guns in the air. Despite this effort to subjugate them, the protestors stormed the building and destroyed pictures of the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar Assad. In response, the regime security forces fired directly at the protestors, [killing one civilian](#), and injuring 18 others.

27. People's Assembly of Syria, Law No. 10 of 2018 on permitting the establishing of an organizational area or more within the organizational chart for administrative units in accordance with a decree pursuant to the proposal of the Minister of Local Administration and Environment and providing for the amendment of a number of the articles of Legislative Decree No. 66/2012. <http://parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=19313&RID=-1&Last=1&First=0&Current-Page=0&Vid=-1&Mode=-1&Service=-1&Loc1=0&Key1=&SDate=&EDate=&Year=2018&Country=&Num=10&Dep=-1&>

28. People's Assembly of Syria, Legislative Decree No. 66 of 2012 on establishing two organizational areas within the parameters of Damascus governorate in line with the general scheme of Damascus city. <http://parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=4300&RID=-1&Last=1&First=0&Current-Page=0&Vid=-1&Mode=-1&Service=-1&Loc1=0&Key1=&SDate=&EDate=&Year=2012&Country=&Num=66&Dep=-1&>

Below is a brief of some of the most noteworthy 2022's developments in the humanitarian field in Syria

On January 11, [Stéphane Dujarric](#), Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, revealed that the UN will continue to deliver aid to 3.4 million people in northwestern Syria for six months as part of the mechanism for UN cross-border aid deliver in accordance with Security Council resolution [2585](#) (July 2021). Also in line with the same resolution, which introduced cross-line aid delivery from Damascus, three convoys entered northwestern Syria on [March 30](#), [May 16](#), and [June 12](#). Each convoy consisted of only 14 trucks, able to meet the needs of approximately 50,000 people.



Relief aid convoy delivered by the UN to northwestern Syria via the Bab al-Hawa crossing with Turkey in northern Idlib governorate - January 30, 2022



Fifth cross-line relief aid convoy that entered northwestern Syria on June 12, 2022

In [a briefing](#) to the Security Council on April 26 regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria, Joyce Msuya, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, stressed that cross-line aid delivery cannot be a substitute for the size and scope of the UN's cross-border humanitarian assistance. Moreover, [a press release](#) published by the COI on May 26 reads, "In opposition-held northwest Syria, humanitarian conditions are deteriorating due to the ongoing hostilities and a deepening economic crisis. Some 4.1 million people there rely on aid to meet their basic needs, and 80 percent of them are women and children. Through the cross-border operations authorized by the Security Council, aid reaches around 2.4 million of them every month. This lifeline is vital to the population in northwest Syria. While some aid is delivered cross-line from within Syria, these deliveries contain much smaller, insufficient quantities and are exposed to attacks along a dangerous delivery route that crosses active front lines."

On June 20, António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, [called](#) on the Security Council member states to extend the mandate of the UN cross-border aid delivery to northwestern Syria in a session held to discuss the situation in Syria, with "humanitarian needs in Syria at their highest levels since the start of the civil war more than 11 years ago."

On July 8, Russia used its veto powers, for the fourth time, in voting against any draft resolution on the mechanism for UN cross-border aid delivery to north Syria. On June 16, we released a report entitled, '[UN Cross-Border Aid Must Continue to Enter Syria, Even If Russia Vetoes It](#)', highlighting that the then-upcoming vote on the extension of the UN cross-border aid delivery would prove an opportunity, as always, for Russia to exploit the UN and the donor states. The report stressed that Russia is a party to the Syrian conflict which uses its veto while perpetrating crimes of forced displacement in partnership with the Syrian regime, amounting to a crime against humanity. The report added that delivering UN cross-border humanitarian assistance is legal and does not require permission from the Security Council, since there is no rule in international law that provides for the illegality of the UN delivering cross-border aid. However, the report noted, the Security Council monopolized this issue and made it a Security Council issue with the adoption of [resolution 2165 in July 2014](#) which implicitly expanded the powers of the Security Council in an arbitrary way and established the Council's control over an issue that should not be within its powers, even if the resolution might appear to be in support of UN aid delivery.

On July 12, 2022, the [Security Council](#) adopted resolution [2642 \(2022\)](#) that provided for extending the mechanism for humanitarian assistance delivery via the Bab al-Hawa crossing with Turkey until January 2023. The text specified, however, that a further six-month extension would require a separate resolution. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 12 in favor, while three Member States (France, the UK, and the US) abstained from voting.

Furthermore, four convoys entered northwestern Syria on [August 4](#), [September 17](#), [October 22](#), and [November 30](#), in accordance with resolutions 2385 and 2642. The convoys were composed of 14, 16, 18, 16 trucks respectively, with each convoy carrying sufficient aid to meet the needs of approximately 50,000.

On December 1, Stéphane Dujarric, the UN Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, revealed in his [daily briefing](#) at the UN headquarters in New York that 4.1 million people in Syria rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their daily needs, with 80 percent of these being women and children. Mr. Dujarric adds that cross-line aid delivery is currently insufficient to cover the huge scale of the UN's operations in delivering cross-border aid, which reaches only 2.7 million Syrian each month.

Moreover, 2022 saw the re-emergence of cells which we believe are probably affiliated with ISIS in eastern Syria, specifically the Syrian Badiya (desert area), as well as in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour and Hasaka governorates. As a result, those areas witnessed security campaigns and military skirmishes carried out by the local controlling forces, whether the international coalition-backed SDF or Syrian regime forces backed by Russian troops.

On August 23, workers for the local council in Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo found a mass grave during excavations to widen a road from the direction of Nadda village, east of the city. The grave, which contained the remains of five individuals, including a child and a woman, is believed to date back to the period when ISIS controlled the area before 2016.



The exhumation of the remains of individuals from a mass grave near Nadda village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo - August 23, 2022
- Photo by Ayoub Akkash

Also in 2022, the Israeli Air Force carried out dozens of aerial attacks on Syria that targeted mostly military sites for Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias. One of the most notable attacks was [on May 13, where SANA reported](#) that an attack targeted multiple points in the central sector, killing five individuals, including one civilian, and injuring seven others, including a girl. Meanwhile, the Times of Israel reported on May 15 that the attack on May 13 had targeted an underground facility according to a satellite company. [The Times of Israel](#) reported on May 15 that the attack completely destroyed the facility which is affiliated with the Syrian regime's Scientific Studies and Research Center.

Israeli forces targeted Damascus and Aleppo airports on multiple occasions, with some of these attacks repeatedly putting those facilities out of commission. On September 20, the [Iran International](#) website, [reporting on an attack targeting Damascus International Airport](#) on September 17, "Israel carried out airstrikes on Syria's Damascus International airport and other positions south of the capital on late Friday and early Saturday, September 16 and 17, targeting what is called 'Unit 2250' -- a special Iranian logistics institution run by Tehran's Revolutionary Guard." The report added that the unit targeted is responsible for receiving weapons, personnel, and equipment, as well as providing support for the Iranian-backed Lebanese militias in Syria.

Laws, decrees, and circulars expanding regime forces' arrests and security forces' grip and further strengthening the regime leadership's autocratic rule.

On March 28, 2022, the Syrian regime promulgated Law No. 15 for 2022²⁹ that included an amendment to the Public Penal Code.³⁰ We have already issued a report providing an overview of the law's amendments related to detainees who were arrested over freedom of expression or in the context of the conflict. SNHR noted that the amendments established in Law No. 15/2022 expand on the ambiguous and previously untried criminal offences, including a wider range of civilians that could be prosecuted for practicing even the simplest forms of freedom of expression of criticisms of authority. We believe that those amendments were adopted to address the widespread popular resentment in the regime's territory even among pro-regime sections of the population in light of the deteriorating economic and living conditions which have had a strong negative impact on civilians. Under the new amendments, anyone who criticizes almost anything can be arrested, further tightening the regime's iron fist and legalizing arrests.

On March 30, 2022, the Syrian regime promulgated Law No. 16 for 2022, criminalizing torture,³¹ in what was ostensibly a response to the Dutch-Canadian efforts at the International Court of Justice.

In response to this legislation, SNHR released a report entitled, ['Laws 15 and 16 of 2022 Issued by the Syrian Regime: Textually Flawed and Impossible to Implement'](#). In [a recorded statement](#), Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR Director, stressed that the Syrian regime is accused of committing crimes, including torture, that qualify as crimes against humanity, which nullifies the legislation supposedly criminalizing torture.

29. People's Assembly of Syria, Law No. 15 of 2022 that includes amendments to a number of articles of the Public Penal Code issued in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 148/1989 and its amendments. <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=22937&RID=-1&Last=120&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

30. People's Assembly of Syria, Law No. 148 of 1949 (Public Penal Code) and its amendment (Legislative Decree No. 1/2011). <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=12278&RID=-1&Last=20&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

31. SANA. (2022, March 30). al-Ra'is al-Asad yaşdurdu qānwnan ltjrym al-ta'dhib [President Assad Passes Law Criminalizing Torture]. Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://sana.sy/?p=1616786>

On April 18, 2022, the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar Assad, promulgated Law No. 20 for 2022 “on Cybercrime”. Article 28 of the law states that “any person who publicizes false news intended to undermine the image of the state or harm national unity shall be sentenced to 3-5 years in jail and fined with 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 [Syrian pounds]” At SNHR, we stress that the text of the law is a further implementation of the regime’s policy restricting freedom of expression, and a further expansion of the broad charges invented and used by the Syrian regime as a pretext since March 2011 to legalize its forces’ widespread arrests and give its security apparatus free reigns. It should be noted that Law No. 15 for 2022 provided a legal pretext for the criminalization of the acts specified in Law No. 20.

In mid-May 2022, the head of the Syrian regime issued decree 127/2022 which discharged four members of the High Constitutional Court and appointed four new members in their place,³² while seven other members, including the head of the Court, retained their seats. This decision demonstrates the additional expansive powers enjoyed by Bashar Assad thanks to a constitutional law adopted in 2012.³³ The President of the Republic having the ability to select the members of the constitutional court is a manifestation of an absolutist, autocratic rule³⁴ that obliterates any sense of judicial independence and separation of powers. [In a statement](#), we detailed three reasons that explain how and why the constitutional court under the rule of the Syrian regime is nothing but a façade that simply completes the nominal structure of the constitution. We noted in the same statement that the High Constitutional Court has failed to challenge the constitutionality of any legalization, decree, or law. Indeed, as long as Syria is ruled by a dictatorship, there will be no judicial independence nor separation of powers.

On August 10, the Syrian regime government’s Minister of Justice issued [Circular No. 22](#) specifying the procedures for the conduct of proceedings related to registering deaths within Sharia courts. The circular included new conditions stipulating that five items of evidence must be submitted to and approved by the relevant judges in proceedings related to registering the death. It also requires that all relevant courts involved in death registration cases comply with the circular’s content. The circular imposed security clearance requirements on Judicial authorities to register death cases, increasing the security services’ intrusion. We issued [a report](#) in regard to this circular in which we reviewed our analysis of the constitutional and legal violations contained in this circular’s text and the consequences thereof.

32. People’s Assembly of Syria, President Assad issues a decree to renew the term of a head and six members of the High Constitutional Court and names four new members. <https://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=22999&RID=1&Last=17&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

33. People’s Assembly of Syria, Legislative Decree No. 94 of 2012 on the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic https://www.sana.sy/?page_id=1489

34. “The Supreme Constitutional Court consists of at least seven members, one of them shall be named president in a decree passed by the President of the Republic.” The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic (2012), Article 141. https://www.sana.sy/?page_id=1489

In October 2022, the Syrian regime promulgated Law No. 42³⁵ that aims to bolster the centralization of authority and to turn local administration councils into mere administrative apparatuses that report to the central authority. According to Law No. 42, specifically to Articles 1, 2, 3, and 4,³⁶ contracts (whether leases, investment, or sale contracts) signed by the local administration councils are to be approved through officials from the executive authority (i.e., the central authority). This law specifies that the approval of contracts is the responsibility of the economic committees that report to the head of the Council of Ministers (Article 1), Minister of Local Administration (Article 2), Minister of Tourism (Article 3), or the Governor (Article 4). Which specific authority is responsible for approving a given contract is dictated only by the value of said contract.

We, at SNHR, affirm that the Syrian regime has deliberately adopted contradictory laws. We have pinpointed four reasons that make Law No. 42 an instrument to strengthen the Syrian regime's central authority which we detailed in a brief report entitled, ['Law No. 42/2022 Further Consolidates the Syrian Regime's Central Authority and Erodes the Powers of the Local Administration Councils'](#).

35. It should be noted that obtaining a copy of Law No. 42 is rather difficult, similar to a number of Syrian legal texts that cannot be found on the official websites of the Syrian regime's organs. This undermines the right to access information.

36. Articles 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Law No. 42 of 2022:

Article 1: "The economic committee of the head of the Council of Ministers handles the power of approving contracts for sale, lease, and investment signed by the administrative units that exceed 1 billion Syrian Pounds."

Article 2: "The Minister of Local Administration and Environment handles the power of approving of contracts for sale, lease, and investment signed by the administrative units whose value is between 500 million Syrian Pounds and 1 billion Syrian Pounds."

Article 3: "The Minister of Tourism handles the power of approving contracts for tourism investment related to tourism projects which are signed by the administrative units and whose value is no more than 1 billion Syrian Pounds."

Article 4: "The Governor handles the power of approving contracts for sale, lease, and investment signed by the administrative units with a value less than 500 million Syrian Pounds."

Three decrees have led to the release of 586 individuals in total, while no fewer than 135,000 of the individuals arrested or forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime since March 2011 are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared by the regime as of the end of 2022.

On January 25, 2022, the head of the Syrian regime Bashar Assad issued a legislative decree ([Legislative Decree No. 3](#)) granting a pardon for crimes committed before January 25, 2022. The decree provided for a “full pardon for offenders of crimes of internal absence as specified in Article 100 and 101 of the Military Penal Code, adopted through Legislative Decree 61/1950 and its amendments.”

On April 30, the Syrian regime issued [Legislative Decree No. 7 for 2022](#), granting a pardon for terrorist acts committed by Syrian nationals before April 30, 2022, except for those that led to the death of human being, as specified by Counterterrorism Law No. 19 of 2012³⁷ and the Public Penal Code adopted through Legislative Decree 148/1949 and its amendments.³⁸ Those are the two main texts used in the trial of prisoners/detainees over their views and in the context of the conflict at extraordinary courts, namely the Counterterrorism Court and the Field Military Court. On May 7, [SANA](#) reported that the Syrian regime government’s Minister of Justice had “cancelled all reports, conviction procedures, jailing, and visits based on crimes specified in the Counterturns Court for all citizens in Syria and abroad.” The article noted that this cancellation was pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 3 for 2022 issued by the head of the Syrian regime Bashar Assad on April 30, 2022. Addressing the subject of the decree, [HRW](#) said that the amnesty issued by Syrian regime President Bashar al Assad on April 30, according to which some detainees were released, was an indication that while there were supposedly criminal charges and fair trials that resulted in convictions for prisoners, the reality is completely different, as little is known about the detainees after their arrest, adding that the regime’s detention system is a “torture archipelago.” The organization added that the Syrian regime’s intelligence services have killed or “allowed detainees to die under torture” while many others continue to suffer in abhorrent prison conditions.

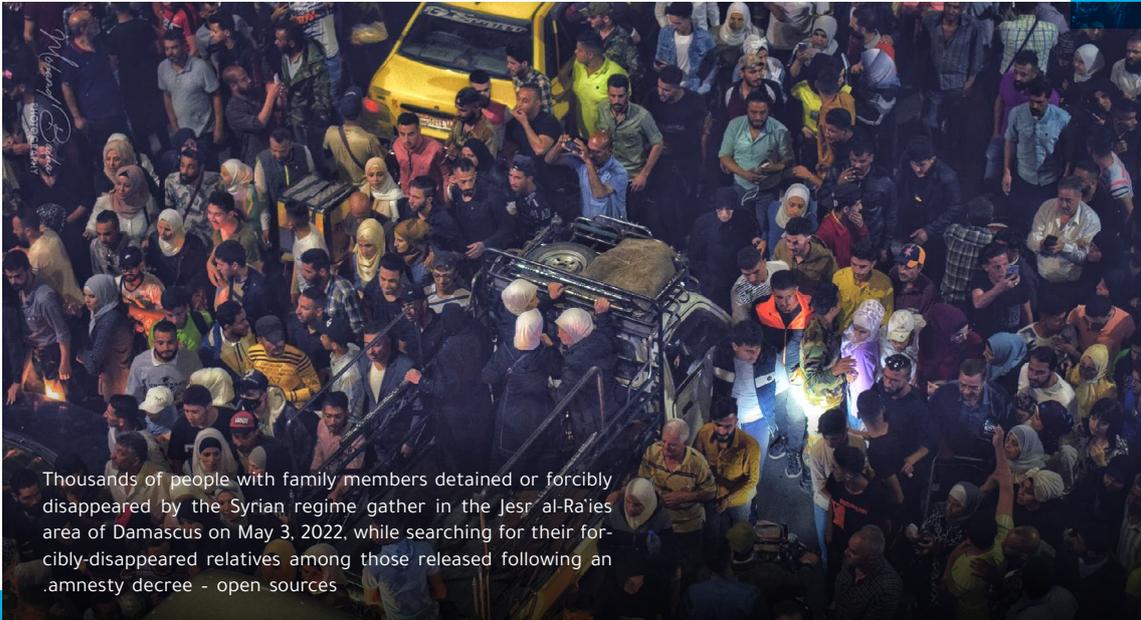
SNHR believes that while this amnesty was theoretically broader than the decrees that predated it, in reality it was no different to all the previous 18 decrees issued by the Syrian regime since 2011. Neither that decree nor those preceding it led to the release of any detainee arrested because of the popular uprising. On May 16, we released [a report analyzing the text of the decree and the releases resulting from it. We also released multiple statements that regularly update the releases we have been able to document.](#)

SNHR’s detainees team, who monitored the implementation of the decree and the releases resulting from it, noted that the Syrian regime deliberately tried to inflict moral and material hurt upon the detainees’ families and upon the dignity of those released through Decree 7/2022 and how it was implemented. To that end, the Syrian regime implemented procedures intended to give the public the false impression that most of the detainees had been released in order to toy with the families of the detainees and forcibly disappeared persons and inflict further pain on them psychologically, morally, and materially. Indeed, we have documented cases of psychological breakdown among some of the forcibly disappeared persons’ family members. The Syrian regime also deliberately released a small number of detainees in batches,

37. People’s Assembly of Syria, Law No. 148 of 1949 (Public Penal Code) and its amendment (Legislative Decree No. 1/2011). <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=4306&RID=-1&Last=113&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

38. People’s Assembly of Syria, Law No. 148 of 1949 (Public Penal Code) and its amendment (Legislative Decree No. 1/2011). <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=12278&RID=-1&Last=20&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

simply dumping them in public squares rather than returning them to their families, or even calling the families to notify them of their release, which left the released detainees, as well as their families, in a state of panic. On hearing about these releases, thousands of relatives of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons gathered to search for their missing loved ones among the released detainees, with most clutching photographs of their missing relatives to ask about them.



Despite all the amnesty decrees, the Syrian regime is still holding 135,000 detainees/forcibly disappeared persons. On November 16, 2022, we released a report entitled, '[Breaking Down the Amnesty Decrees Issued by the Syrian Regime Between March 2011 and October 2022](#)' noting that all the amnesty decrees have led to the release of 7,351 detainees who were arrested arbitrarily, while the Syrian regime is still holding approximately 135,253 detainees/forcibly disappeared persons. The report concludes that amnesty decrees only result in a very limited number of releases, while arbitrary arrests continue in a widespread manner, with the Syrian regime continuing to carry out more arbitrary arrests and enforce disappearances to this day, regardless of the amnesty decrees it may issue.

On December 21, 2022, the Syrian regime issued Legislative Decree No. 24 for the year 2022 granting a full pardon for crimes committed prior to that date.³⁹ We are currently working on a report analyzing this decree, to be published shortly. We, at SNHR, believe that Legislative Decree No. 24 was no different to the regime's previous 21 amnesty decrees. Indeed, it was actually worse in terms of exclusions, to the point that it is completely redundant in regard to those detained and forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. In reality, this decree was released in an effort to ease popular discontent in areas under the regime's control by securing the release of defendants and convicts charged with minor crimes and offenses. We have pointed out previously how the high frequency with which the Syrian regime issues amnesty decrees that do not primarily target unjustly charged detainees, has undermined the penal policy of the Syrian state by securing the release of thousands of criminals

39. People's Assembly of Syria, President Assad issues a decree granting a public pardon for crimes committed before December 21, 2022 <https://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=23294&RID=-1&Last=108&First=0&CurrentPage=0>

The fate of some of the forcibly disappeared persons from Damascus' al-Tadamon neighborhood is a horrific example of the fate that thousands of forcibly disappeared persons may have faced at the hands of Syrian regime forces, namely summarily executing arrested individuals before they could even be taken to detention centers.

In late-April 2022, New Lines Magazine published [an investigative](#) report conducted by Annsar Shahhoud and Dr. Uğur Ümit Üngör of the University of Amsterdam's NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide. The investigation concludes that Amjad Youssef, a Syrian regime security officer with Intelligence Branch 227 of the Military Security, was responsible for arresting/abducting dozens of Syrians in al-Tadamon neighborhood, then forcing them at a gunpoint to the edge of a purpose-dug pit before shooting them then throwing their bodies in or throwing them in then shooting them dead. The investigation showed a confession from Amjad Youssef to committing this harrowing crime.

It should be noted that the identities of the victims killed by Amjad Youssef and his colleagues were not revealed by the Syrian regime, and their families were not informed of their deaths. In other words, many of those victims were believed to be alive, but forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. However, the investigation concluded that a proportion of the forcibly disappeared persons do in fact face death by those horrible methods, after which their dead bodies are buried or incinerated. Ever since we managed to obtain high-definition video footage of the killings, we have spared no effort to identify the victims, mainly through cross-checking the information we received with the data on enforced disappearances we've documented for the relevant time period. This task is face exceptionally difficult, however, firstly because years have passed since the incident caught on film took place, and secondly, because most of the al-Tadamon neighborhood's residents have been displaced often more than once, and as such it is not easy to locate potential relatives of the victims, or survivors and eyewitnesses. Nonetheless, SNHR has confirmed that Amjad Youssef and his colleagues (Najib al-Halabi, Bassam al-Hassan, and Fadi Saqqar) have been implicated in the arrest and enforced disappearance of hundreds of Syrians, while executing a proportion of them, in addition to raping many of the wives and relatives of many of the detainees abducted and forcibly disappeared in exchange for giving some of the victims' wives information about their fates. This adds to the near-endless string of violations that have been and are still being perpetrated by regime security personnel, also including looting and degradation.

In early-May 2022, SNHR received information that the Syrian regime had detained Amjad Youssef. We released a brief report on the subject entitled, [‘The Syrian Regime Is Holding the Criminal Amjad Youssef, Who Killed Dozens of Syrians and Raped Dozens of Women in al Tadamun Neighborhood in Damascus’](#), in which we affirmed that the regime would not have detained Amjar Youssef had he not been publicly exposed as being involved in crimes at the highest levels. Despite the regime being fully aware of his crimes, Amjad had been walking freely for years after perpetrating these atrocities. His is not an isolated case; indeed it represents the norm rather than the exception for the regime, with thousands of figures from the regime military and security apparatus involved in perpetrating similarly horrendous violations, without even one of them ever being arrested or held accountable.

SNHR's database contains details on thousands of enforced disappearance cases that include dozens involving whole families, as well as women and children who fell victim to the regime's machine of enforced disappearance immediately after their arrest. The families of those victims have been denied even the most basic information about their loved ones since the first moments of their arrest. Many of those families told us that they've tried tirelessly, through both formal and informal channels, to find out the whereabouts or fate of their loved ones, but to no avail. Even with our constants monitoring of the transfer procedures for detainees/forcibly disappeared persons among detention centers through interviewing hundreds of survivors and eyewitnesses, we have been unable to obtain any new sightings of those held in the regime's detention centers. This only supports our fears that they might have been executed immediately after their arrest at the regime checkpoints where they were arrested without even reaching any detention center.

Military operations and the use of prohibited weapons



In 2022, the frequency of military operations declined in relation to previous years in a similar fashion to 2021. Even though Idlib in northwestern Syria is subject to the Russian-Turkish ceasefire agreement that went into effect on March 6, 2020, however, we documented military operations there in 2022 involving ground-based and aerial bombardment by the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance which extended to populated areas away from dividing lines. We also documented attacks that failed to distinguish between civilian and military targets. Broadly speaking, the bombardment operations were concentrated in the villages and towns of Jabal al-Zawiya which are located close to the dividing lines with armed opposition factions in the southern, western, and eastern suburbs of Idlib. Meanwhile, artillery attacks targeted the Sahl al-Ghab area in the western suburbs of Hama, and the eastern and western suburbs of Aleppo. The ground-based attacks by Syrian regime forces resulted in civilian casualties and damages to vital facilities. On July 30, for instance, we recorded the killing of [two sibling children](#) in an artillery attack by Syrian regime forces that targeted a public road in the middle of Kafr Ta'al village in western Aleppo suburbs.

In mid-2022, some areas in the southern region of Syria saw a military escalation that led to a displacement wave among civilians. On May 28, gunmen backed by the Syrian regime's Military Intelligence division raided a swimming pool complex in al-Mqous neighborhood, eastern Suwayda city under the pretext of searching for alleged drug smugglers. The gunmen opened fire at civilians as they were trying to escape, [killing two](#), while a third civilian was killed by the same forces beside the pool as they were attempting to flee. In the aftermath of the operation, demonstrations were held in al-Mqous neighborhood, with armed clashes ensuing between regime servicemen and gunmen from the neighborhood, during which a fourth civilian was killed, while five others, two of them women, were injured. We have not yet been able to identify the party responsible for these casualties. On the evening of the same day, Syrian regime forces and vehicles were deployed in the vicinity of the neighborhood, subjecting it to mortar shelling which damaged the buildings and led residents to flee the next day in fear of further bombardment.

In Daraa governorate, meanwhile, Syrian regime forces enforced a security cordon around Tafas city in the western Daraa suburbs, erecting sand barricades around the city on the pretext of pursuing wanted fugitives. On July 27, [one civilian was killed and several others injured](#) in artillery bombardment by Syrian regime forces targeting agricultural lands in the vicinity of Tafas city.

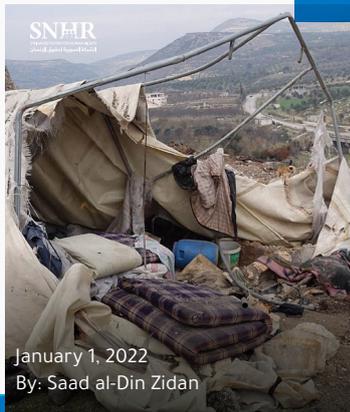
[On August 10, Syrian regime artillery forces bombed Tafas city](#) using mortar shells, injuring five individuals. The bombardment took place in tandem with clashes between Syrian regime forces and local fighters as regime forces attempted to enter the city's southern neighborhood. These military operations led to mass displacement from the southern neighborhood, whose residents fled to other neighborhoods in the city.

In the early hours of 2022, at around dawn on January 1, fixed-wing Russian warplanes carried out airstrikes on the Jesr al-Shoghour area in Idlib's western suburbs. [Two girls were killed in the attack and 11 others injured](#) in the attack, which also damaged the IDP camp where they were living and killed a number of sheep.

Russian airstrikes continued throughout early January in northwestern Syria, mostly on the outskirts of Idlib city, Kansafra village in the southern Idlib suburbs, al-Jdaida village, and the suburbs of Jesr al-Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib. Most of the attacks targeted HTS military points. Russian forces failed to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality, with the airstrikes resulting in damages to vital facilities and civilian gathering places.

Exclusive photos showing the destruction and damage caused by Russian airstrikes in the northwestern region of Idlib - early January 2022

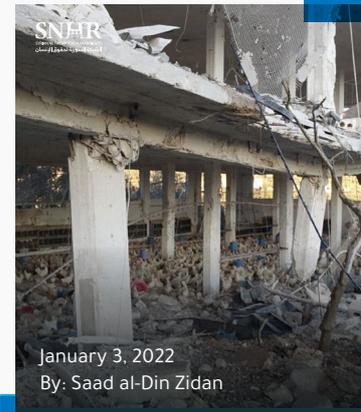
Damage to an IDP's tent in al-Nahr al-Abyad area of western Idlib governorate caused by a Russian airstrike.



Damage to al-Arshani Water Station in northwestern Idlib city caused by a missile attack by Russian forces near the station.



Photo showing the destruction in a poultry farm in northern Armanaz town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate caused by a missile attack by Russian forces on the farm.



On the subject of using prohibited weapons, we documented one attack involving the use of cluster munitions by Syrian regime forces in 2022. The attack targeted an area heavily populated with IDPs camps, which constitutes a war crime. Meanwhile, we documented no attacks using incendiary weapons, chemical weapons, or barrel bombs in 2022.

Meanwhile, armed opposition factions and HTS continued their bombardment of areas under the control of Syrian regime forces in the suburbs of Hama, Idlib, and Aleppo, in retaliation for the bombardment of their territories. However, most of these attacks targeted military sites.

In October 2022, rounds of vicious infighting took place among SNA factions in the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo in which HTS was also involved. The clashes were caused by the Failaq al-Thaleth (Third Division), an SNA faction, taking over the headquarters of Feraqt al-Hamza (Hamza Squad), known as al-Hamzat, another SNA faction, in al-Bab city on October 11. This came after it was proven that Ferqat al-Hamza was responsible for the assassination of the media activist Mohammad Abu Ghannoum and his pregnant wife on October 7.

HTS took advantage of the clashes to carry out a wide offensive that aimed to expand its territories at the expense of the armed opposition (mainly the al-Failaq al-Tha'leth and al-Jabha al-Wataniya Le al-Tahreer Wa al-Banaa' and the 'National Front for Liberation and Building', both are armed opposition factions).

HTS launched its offensive from several points within areas already under its control, the most important of which are the town of Atma in the suburbs of Idlib governorate and the towns of Ghazawiya, and Deir al Ballout in Jabal Sam'an in western Aleppo governorate. The military operations between the opposition factions and HTS extended to large areas of the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. HTS' military operations, which have lasted since 12 December up until the moment of preparing this statement, led to the group controlling large areas of the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, estimated at about 560 km² in total, including dozens of villages and districts, the most important of which are Afrin city and Jendeires town, and the villages of Ein Dara, Qerzaihel, Babilit and Me>rata, with the group also attempting to take over Kafr Janneh town in the Azaz district of the northern suburbs of Aleppo. The clashes that took place from October 12-17, 2022, resulted in civilian casualties and the forced displacement of approximately 13,000 people, with over 12 IDP camps directly affected by these military operations. On October 18, SNHR released [a statement](#) warning of the dangers of HTS's expansion and of providing any support for the group.



Families sleeping in the open in the suburbs of Afrin city, Aleppo, after fleeing the zone where clashes were taking place - The night of October 13, 2022

Meanwhile, the SDF escalated their military attacks against the territories of the armed opposition/SNA, mainly in the northern suburbs of Aleppo, in both the northeastern and northwestern parts. The SDF's attacks resulted in [casualties](#) and [material damage to vital civilian facilities](#). Notably, the SDF targeted [IDP camps and gathering places in ground-based attacks](#). On April 18, for instance, an artillery attack by the SDF targeted a [Civil Defense team in Jarablos city](#) in eastern Aleppo, injuring three Civil Defense members, and heavily damaging one of the team's vehicles. On April 26, a similar attack targeted [a sports ground in Marea city](#), injuring multiple children.

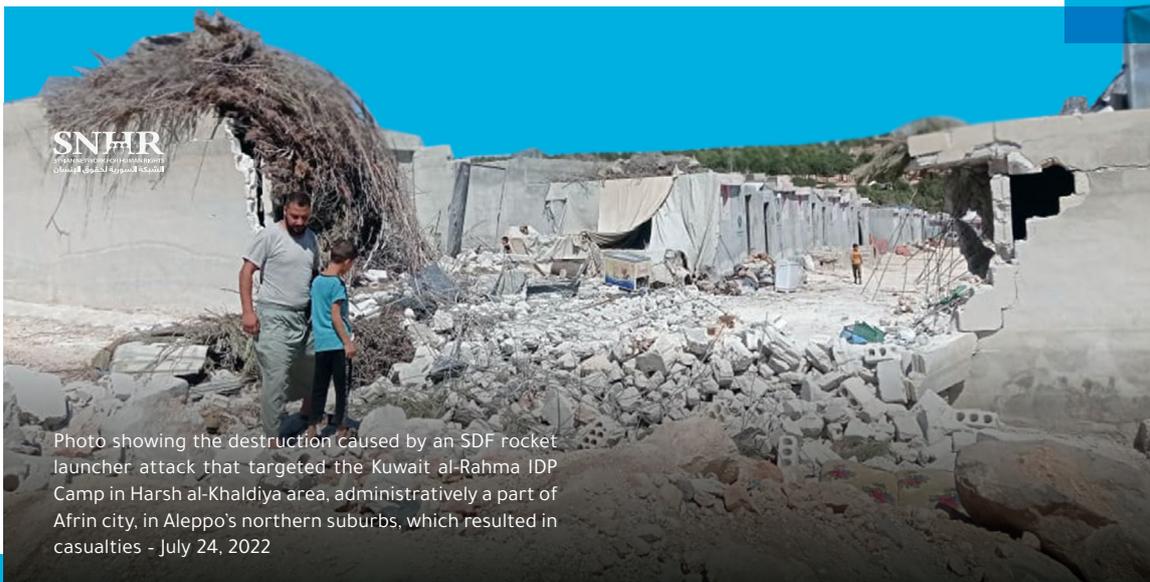


Photo showing the destruction caused by an SDF rocket launcher attack that targeted the Kuwait al-Rahma IDP Camp in Harsh al-Khaldiya area, administratively a part of Afrin city, in Aleppo's northern suburbs, which resulted in casualties - July 24, 2022

We also documented that those areas were targeted in many ground-based attacks whose perpetrators we have not yet been able to identify. However, we suspect that the perpetrators were either Syrian regime forces or the SDF, given that the attacks originated from the direction of their territories. One of these attacks, on January 20, resulted [in a massacre, in which seven civilians, including five children, were killed and a school was damaged](#). Meanwhile, al-Bab city was targeted in two attacks, [on February 2](#) and [August 19](#), both of which resulted in massacres of civilians, as well as [damages to vital facilities](#).

In 2022, we also documented the killing of extremist Islamist groups affiliates in attacks by the international coalition forces. On February 3, international coalition forces conducted a helicopter landing operation targeting a house in Atama village in northern Idlib suburbs. According to a [statement released by the White House](#) quoting US President Joe Biden, the operation targeted Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, head of ISIS, successfully killing him. It should be noted, however, that the incident also resulted in the killing of six children and three women. On February 14, we released [a statement](#) shedding light the responsibility borne by ISIS by hiding among civilians, thereby posing a severe threat to their lives; however, this does not exempt the attacking party of its responsibility for these civilian deaths according to international law.

Photos: The two-story house in northern Atama village, Idlib suburbs, where the ISIS leadership figures were located, where they used civilians as human shields. These photos show the damage caused to the house by the international coalition operation that targeted ISIS head Abdullah Qarash,



A state of insecurity continued to prevail across Syria in 2022, with SNHR documenting assassinations of civilians by gunmen [we have not yet been able to identify in multiple governorates](#), most of which took place in the two governorates of Daraa and Deir Ez-Zour. One of the most prominent cases was [the assassination of an instructor at an educational center](#) in Bosra al-Sham in eastern Daraa governorate on June 22. Meanwhile, [we documented more assassinations in al-Hawl Camp](#).⁴⁰

We also documented dozens of killings by individuals/parties that we have not yet been able to identify across Syria. Furthermore, we documented an increase in suicides over the last years, some of which were by children. We believe that most of these suicides have taken place in light of the worsening living situation and the terrible toll that exerts on society.

Also in 2022, we documented remote suicide/forced bombing in multiple governorates and areas across Syria, as well as by various parties. These incidents were concentrated [in the governorates of Aleppo, Hama, Hasaka, Deir Ez-Zour, Raqqa, and Daraa](#). Identifying the perpetrator of such remote bombings is a difficult task. The controlling forces in any area bear the responsibility to protect the civilians living in its territories, launch an investigation into any incident, and make the findings of any such investigations public. These attacks have resulted in civilian casualties, as well as inflicting damage on vital civilian facilities.



The explosion site of an IED whose source we have not yet been able to identify in al-Bab city, Aleppo. The bombing killed a humanitarian worker - June 15, 2022

40. Located in eastern Hasaka city near the Iraqi-Syrian borders, and houses approximately 60,000 people.

Furthermore, 2022 saw more civilians killed by the explosion of bombardment remnants, unexploded munitions, and landmines. Most of these incidents took place in the governorates of [Deir Ez-Zour, Hasaka, Raqqa, Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, and Daraa](#), as well as in areas under regime control. Dozens of civilians, including children and women, were killed by these explosions. Determining which party planted a landmine is an exceptionally difficult task since many forces and parties gained and subsequently lost control of the areas where those explosions took place. With the continuing and mounting deaths, it is clear that none of these forces have made any noteworthy effort to remove landmines or try to pinpoint them, fence them off, or warn local residents of their lethal dangers. Indeed, we documented dozens of deaths by landmines, with one of the most notable incidents taking place on June 11 when [10 civilians, including four children and four women](#), were killed, and 32 others were injured, by a landmine whose source we have not yet been able to identify near a truck transporting workers near Deir al-Adas village in northern Daraa suburbs.

Ever since ISIS lost its footing in most of Syria in 2019, the group has adopted tactics involving surprise hit-and-run attacks. In 2022, the group targeted Syrian regime forces' sites, in addition to killing civilians in Deir Ez-Zour governorate and in al-Hawl Camp in Hasaka suburbs which houses families with ties to ISIS.

The most notable operation by ISIS in 2022, however, came on January 20 when [the group](#) detonated two car bombs, one of which targeted the gate of Ghwayran Prison (al-Sena'a Prison), while the second exploded about 200 meters from the prison, which is located in Ghwayran neighborhood in Hasaka city. The two bombings were succeeded by an offensive on the SDF-controlled prison by ISIS members carrying machine guns. Clashes ensued and lasted for several hours, while the prisoners mounted an insurgency inside the prison. The prisoners subsequently took over the prison, while the clashes between ISIS and SDF forces extended as far as the two neighborhoods of Ghwayran and al-Zohour in Hasaka city, with ISIS fighters spreading in those neighborhoods. [International coalition warplanes carried out airstrikes targeting the sites where ISIS fighters gathered in the two neighborhoods](#), most notably the buildings housing the [Faculties of Economics and Civil Engineering in the Euphrates University](#) in Hasaka. On January 26, the SDF [announced](#) it has taken full control of the prison, as all the ISIS fighters surrendered themselves. On January 26, [HRW](#) revealed that, according to SDF sources, «at least 284 people died during the assault and counterattacks... 250 'attackers' were killed along with 27 members of their own forces and seven civilians." HRW's report added that child detainees were among those killed and wounded in the prison.

The clashes led to the displacement of at least 40,000 civilians from the two SDF-held neighborhoods of Ghwayran and al-Zohour towards the center of Hasaka city and eastern Hasaka suburbs. In [a report](#) released on November 1, HRW said that at least 140 private buildings housing 147 families in northeastern Syria were destroyed or damaged by the SDF over January and February 2022 in their attempts to capture the detainees who escaped and the ISIS fighters who attacked the prison in Ghwayran neighborhood, Hasaka city.

Meanwhile, ground-based attacks by Turkish forces and armed opposition factions/SNA continued in December. Those attacks targeted SDF-controlled territories in northern Aleppo suburbs and the areas of Manbej and Ein al-Arab in eastern Aleppo suburbs.

Ongoing violations against children and women



In the period of almost 12 years since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011, the children of Syria have been relentlessly subjected to the most heinous forms of aggression, including killings, sexual violence, forced conscription, the targeting of schools and hospitals, and the deliberate curtailment of access to humanitarian aid; while all these forms of aggression have been practiced by the various parties to the armed conflict in Syria, the data conclusively indicates that the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies bear responsibility for the overwhelming majority of violations against children, some of which amount to crimes against humanity, such as enforced disappearance, torture, and forced displacement. As SNHR's database shows, at least 5,162 of the children arrested by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces since March 2011 are still detained or forcibly disappeared as of the end of 2022, with approximately 72 percent of these children detained or forcibly disappeared by the regime. Furthermore, [a UNICEF report](#) released on March 14 noted that of the 6.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria over 3.2 million are internally displaced children who account for roughly half of all IDPs in Syria, while an additional 2.8 million children are registered as refugees in neighboring countries. On education, approximately 2.45 million children are receiving no education in Syria, 40 percent of whom are girls. Moreover, one out of every three schools cannot be used because it was destroyed or damaged, or is being used to house IDP families, or for military purposes.

Children are victimized by virtually every violation that is committed against the Syrian people. Over the course of the past 12 years, SNHR's continuous monitoring and documentation shows the mounting horrific violations being committed against children. Every year, on International Children's Day, SNHR releases its annual report on violations against children,⁴¹ in which we outline the horrific violations against Syria's children that we have been able to document, using evidence from our database. It should be noted that there are also other forms of abuse against children, as all the parties to the conflict have conscripted children. Furthermore, [Russia's abuse of its veto powers at the Security Council against delivering humanitarian aid](#) is an explicit aggression against hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced children in northern Syria. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are at least [3 million IDP children in Syria](#), most of whom live in camps or tents scattered over wide areas of the regions outside the control of Syrian regime forces, but the majority are concentrated on the Turkish-Syrian borders. IDPs, including children, suffer from extremely poor living conditions, lacking the most basic living essentials, such as hygiene, privacy, bathrooms, and a safe shelter. The lack of health and educational facilities in camps have reduced levels of child health, with children who become ill forced to face the additional burden of travelling to other places to find medical care. With children also deprived of education, this situation has led to diseases and illiteracy running rampant among IDP children. According to [a report by the World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) released on May 19, 700,000 more children than previously were suffering hunger in Syria due to the worsening economic conditions in the country.

41. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2022d). On World Children's Day: SNHR's 11th Annual Report on Violations Against Children in Syria. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://snhr.org/?p=58826>

Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told the newspaper [The National](#) on May 23 that approximately 22,000 children in al-Hawl Camp were being deprived of a normal childhood at a time when humanitarian efforts focused on the bare essentials of life rather than providing them with a stable and healthy environment. Al-Hawl Camp, he adds, is one of the largest crises with regard to child protection worldwide today, with 10,000 of the camp's residents being non-Arab foreigners, while the remainder are mostly from Syria and Iraq.

On the subject of recruiting children for military service, most of the parties to the conflict in Syria continued to force children into the armed conflict by recruiting or conscripting them into their ranks in 2022. This has been done either by attracting and luring the children or abducting them for conscription purposes as is the case with the SDF which has, for years, been establishing and running military training camps specifically designated for children which are located in areas far from their homes. The group prevents children from contacting their families, many of whom have been subjected to threats of violence if they reveal to the UN or human rights groups that their children were abducted and conscripted. Furthermore, the families are not allowed to visit their children and, if they attempt to do so, they are met with verbal abuse and expulsion.

In June 2022, the UN Secretary-General submitted his annual report on ["Children and Armed Conflict"](#) for the year 2021. In regard to Syria, the report noted that the UN had verified 2,271 grave violations against children in Syria in 2021, including killing, maiming, recruitment, detention, deprivation of liberty, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access, which affected at least 2,022 children throughout the year. The report further revealed that the monitoring process, in general, faced obstacles due to attacks or threats of attacks by the violating parties against monitors of violations, civic society activists, and human rights defenders. By comparing Syria with other nations worldwide, we noted that Syria is:

1. The worst country in the world in terms of the recruitment and use of children.
2. The second worst country in the world in terms of killing and maiming children.
3. The third worst country in the world in terms of attacks on schools and hospitals.
4. The fourth worst country in the world in terms of denial of humanitarian access.

The catastrophic ramifications imposed by the conflict have forced numerous children into labor. Some of these children are forced into the worst forms of child labor. As a result, a proportion of the children are suffering severe trauma and psychological disorders that might last for decades to come.

Meanwhile, the various parties to the conflict also continued committing violations against women. In 2022, we documented various types of violations against Syrian women, including horrific violations such as killing, arrest/enforced disappearance, torture, and forced displacement; which, we can confirm, have

not stopped, even if, statistically speaking, there has been a decline in the overall number of violations compared to 2021 and 2020. In addition, the ramifications of 12 years to date of these ongoing violations against both women and children have been among the main causes of the challenges faced by Syria's women in 2022, making them vulnerable to further violations. For instance, because of the large scope of violations against men that includes killing, arrest, and enforced disappearance, women's role has undergone a major shift, with an increase in the number of women wholly responsible for families with orphans and children. These women are facing additional burdens made more difficult by the realities of ongoing displacement. According to [a report by World Vision](#), some of the women living in some of the camps that are difficult to access in northwestern Syria are facing increasing levels of violence, with some women forced to engage in "survival sex". Furthermore, over 80 percent of women said they are not receiving adequate healthcare, while 95 percent say they have feelings of hopelessness. Meanwhile, 34 percent of children said they have experienced at least one form of violence, while 2 percent said they had been married at an early age. The report also stresses that child labor has become a serious issue, with 58 percent of boys and 49 percent of girls aged 11 or older forced to work. In a statement released by [Doctors Without Borders \(MSF\)](#) in April 2022, the organization revealed that most women in northwestern Syria are living under harsh conditions and suffering food insecurity. The statement added that "existing challenges such as gender-based violence and early marriage further compound women's vulnerabilities."

Furthermore, the widespread military operations, whether targeted or indiscriminate, carried out by the parties to the conflict, especially by the Syrian-Russian alliance, which is by far the main perpetrator, which did not respect the principle of distinction have caused countless injuries among children. We are today facing a significantly high percentage of disabled children that require special care, which in turn requires more effort to attend to those children, in tandem with facing doubled material burdens which necessitate that women work in light of the absence of husbands who have either been killed or arrested/disappeared.

Living and economic conditions in Syria



With the different parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria continuing to perpetrate various types of violations, the country itself, both the state and society, suffered catastrophic consequences as a result, all worsened by the abysmal security situation throughout Syria. As such, the Syrian economy has clearly been in freefall, with its remaining financial, human, and social capital collapsing, all because the Syrian regime decided to deplete the state's resources in its war against the Syrian people and their peaceful demonstrations that later turned into an internal armed conflict. This was more especially the case because the regime deployed its full military capabilities, using its army, with all of its equipment and tens of thousands of waged employees in the different military apparatuses and local militias founded by the regime. Due to this, over half of the Syrian people have been displaced between those displaced internally and refugees who sought asylum abroad. Syria has suffered vertical, as well as horizontal, divisions among its various demographic groups, in light of the vast and gaping disparities that have emerged and widened since 2011. To this day, the Syrian economy continues to descend in a downward spiral trajectory. On January 4, [the WHO issued an emergency appeal](#) to secure the urgent health needs for 2022, in which the organization stressed that "In 2022, 12.2 million people will be in need of health services, of which 4.4 million are displaced, 1.33 million will be children aged under 5 years (including an anticipated 503 000 new births) and 3.38 million are women of reproductive age (15-49 years)." According to the 2022 health sector severity scale, areas located in five governorates in northwestern and northeastern Syria are among the most at-risk regions.

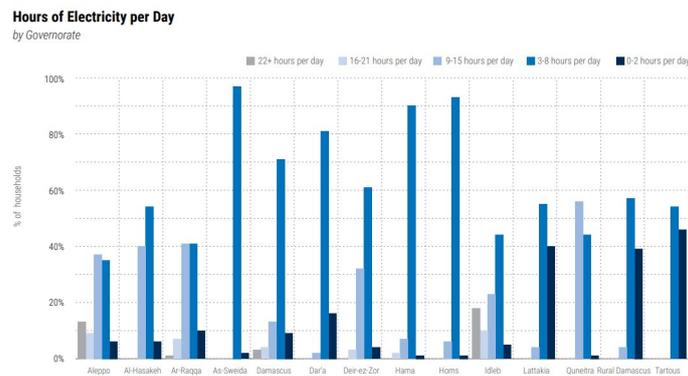
Speaking in [a February 25 briefing](#), Joyce Msuya, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, noted that Syria is one of the 10 most food insecure countries worldwide, stressing that Syria's economy was continuing to spiral downwards, as it has kept doing. Meanwhile, the UHCNR estimated, in [a report](#) on Syria released on November 30, that over 14.6 million people in the country, including 6.9 million IDPs, are in need of humanitarian assistance, a nine percent increase over the previous year's figures. The report added that approximately 9.6 million people in Syria are in severe need of humanitarian assistance.

Syrian regime territories: Indeed, the areas and the extent to which they are affected vary according to the controlling force. In this, the Syrian regime's territories are among the worst in terms of the living and economic conditions. The Syrian Pound saw [a sharp and rapid decline](#) from the start of 2022. For instance, \$1 was equal to 3,975 S.P. for purchase on March 16, and as of the last week of December 2022, \$1 was equal to 7,100 S.P. for sale or 6,950 S.P. for purchase, according to the '[Lira al-Yaum](#)' (Syrian Pound Today).⁴² Commenting on conditions in Syria in an article assessing the livability of cities around the world, [the Economist](#) stated, "Under Bashar Assad's brutal dictatorship, some 90% of people in Syria live in poverty."

42. A website that tracks the exchange rates for the Syrian Pound in the Free Market.

The Syrian regime's government is simply unable to provide the most basic day-to-day needs for the populace, including water, power, and bread. Russia and Iran, the regime's allies, do not contribute to the provision of such services. On the contrary, in fact, on February 5, the regime government made the decision to remove subsidies from certain groups in Syrian society as part of a "[subsidy restructuring process](#)". Commenting on the policy on February 10, Hussein Arnous, the [regime government's Prime Minister](#), said: "The state is no longer capable of maintaining the previously established subsidy policy."

Some areas under regime control have to make do with a '[seven-to-one](#)' power austerity plan, where the electricity supply is cut for seven hours then available for one hour, while other areas only have power for [15 minutes](#) for every six hour with no power. According to [an UNHCHR report](#) released on December 22, these regular and frequent power outages have forced over half of Syrians to regularly rely on candles to light their homes. Moreover, the report reveals that electricity was the second-greatest unmet need in Syria for 2022.



Hours of electricity supplied by the Syrian regime's government across governorates per day -
Source: UNHCHR released on December 22, 2022

On the subject of fuel, citizens have had to regularly adapt to severe shortages, given the crisis caused by the absence of subsidized household gas. Prices of different types of fuel (diesel, petroleum, household and industrial gas) all saw multiple increases this year⁴³ far beyond affordable levels, which naturally affected the prices of other goods such as foodstuffs and medicines.

[The fuel price rises](#), not to mention the scarcity or outright absence of fuel in markets, distribution centers and gas stations have caused ongoing crises throughout the year, the most recent of which came in December, when public and private transport services effectively stopped working, with some companies reducing the frequency of their travel services, while other suspended operations altogether in light of the shortage of fuel, with the travel network coming to an almost complete halt. Additionally, on December 6, [the Syrian regime government](#) declared December 11 and December 18 to be official holidays due to the situation of the petroleum market in the country, which the government claimed is caused by the "siege and unfair economic situation imposed on the country."

43. Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, [resolution no. 1320](#)

Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, [resolution no. 1321](#)



All these factors have intensified the suffering of Syria's citizens. In fact, we have noticed a significant and steady rise in rates of emigration from the regime's territories, whether through official or non-official methods. Despite the high cost of obtaining a passport (\$300-\$800), the country's immigration and passport centers have been overcrowded with people hoping to get a passport to emigrate. In an interview with the [al-Ikhbariya, a state news channel](#), Salam Safaf, the Minister of Administrative Development in the Syrian regime's government, revealed on July 6 that of the 80,000 job vacancies available at the time, nobody had applied for 40,413 or over half of the posts, reflecting increasingly severe labor shortages a shortage in human resources.

The medical sector was affected worse than most by the decisions made by the Syrian regime's government in 2022, with many patients, especially those suffering from chronic diseases, effectively denied their desperately-needed medication, and with medicines not found in pharmacies, either because pharmaceutical factories had stopped operating or due to their prohibitively expensive prices. On December 17, [SANA](#) reported that the High Technical Committee for Medication, affiliated with the regime's government, decided to raise the price of medicines by 30 percent. SANA quoted a Ministry of Health official as saying: "Some factory owners requested a 100 percent price increase, but the committee decided to limit the increase to 30 percent as to ensure that production keeps going at the national pharmaceutical factories while taking into account the existing economic conditions." In reality, however, pharmacies have been charging two or three times the original price for medicines according to a report published by the state-owned [Al-Watan](#) newspaper on December 22.

It is clear that the medical sector in the regime-held areas is collapsing. Government hospital and medical facilities are grappling with the crisis caused by the aforementioned shortage of medicines for some chronic diseases. [Al-Watan Newspaper](#) reported on July 25 that some Thalassemia patients have not had their dose in nearly six months, putting their lives at risk. The same newspaper reported on its [Facebook page](#) on August 23 that some hospitals even lack basic supplies like splints, meaning that patients must secure supplies, including medicine, out of their own pocket, further exacerbating their suffering.

On the other hand, there seems to be no rehabilitation and reconstruction in the many large areas and neighborhoods that have been destroyed in those areas that returned to the regime's control. We have not witnessed any serious attempts to remove rubble and debris. We, at SNHR, believe this was a deliberate policy on the part of the Syrian regime, which has massively drained the state resources in expenditure on bombardment and torture practices, while asking others to fund the country's reconstruction. Even worse, we have documented numerous cases in which many municipalities have torn down structures for violating laws even though they were sheltering dozens of families, most of whom had been displaced from their original homes. In most cases, this has been done to take control of those areas.

In northwestern Syria, there are two major controlling forces:

- HTS has administrative and military control over wide areas of northwestern Syria - primarily Idlib governorate and parts of western Aleppo. The Salvation Government and its affiliated local councils are the administrative branch for the group.
- The interim Syrian government, affiliated with the SNA, also operates local councils.

The residents of these areas are grappling with poor economic and living conditions, with the overwhelming majority in these areas being IDPs, who are naturally the most impoverished groups in Syrian society, having left and lost their homes and jobs. In the current circumstances, those people have no realistic chance of returning to their original areas, which are now under the control of Syrian regime forces. Under these conditions, and with the high unemployment rates among them, IDPs rely mostly on humanitarian assistance. ⁴⁴According to a report released by Amnesty International entitled, '[Unbearable Living Conditions](#)', 1.7 million people from the entire displaced population live in camps, with 58 percent of these being children and 22 percent being women.

In northwestern Syria, the Turkish Lira is used in all transactions. Unfortunately, the Turkish currency's purchasing power has been in decline since mid-2022, and as such people are grappling with rising prices. Moreover, the fear of any potential bombardment by the Syrian regime and Russian forces impedes the residents of those areas from carrying out medium- or long-term projects, which is one of the most important goals of the sporadic, but continuing attacks by the Russian-Syrian alliance. The worsening economic and living conditions in those areas can be explained by a number of factors, most notably:

44. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022). Syria: UNHCR Operational Update. November 2022. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-unhcr-operational-update-november-2022>

- The high prices for basic services. On January 11, for instance, [Izaz Local Council, affiliated with the interim Syrian government](#), set the price for a cylinder of household gas at \$11.80, creating further difficulties for local residents given the fluctuating rates for the Turkish Lira against US dollar. There also have been price increases in the suburbs of Idlib and Afrin city in Aleppo suburbs.
- HTS has a monopoly over the Bab al-Hawa crossing with Turkey. Through its relations with dealers and economic figures working with the group, HTS completely controls the flow of food supplies and any other goods entering its territories, which allows the group to control the prices of basic goods; including fuel, gas, sugar, and food supplies. This came at a heavy price for civilians who must deal with the resulting lack of some goods or sharp price increases for others, including bread.
- HTS also places restrictions on people passing through the two crossings of Deir al-Ballout⁴⁵ and al-Ghazawwiya⁴⁶ and inspects people coming from the areas of northern and western Aleppo to Idlib suburbs, blocking the entry of food supplies, gas, and fuel. The group also measures the levels of gas in car tanks passing through these crossings and blocks the entry of those cars with full gas tanks. We also documented that HTS security forces carry out checks on children and women in the areas separating Deir al-Ballout in Afrin area, Aleppo suburbs, and Atma village, northern Idlib suburbs, who regularly attempt to smuggle fuel containers with a capacity of 5-10 litres to sell in Idlib suburbs, taking advantage of the price difference between the two territories. In fact, we've documented incidents in which such children and women were attacked by HTS servicemen who seized the fuel they were carrying.
- HTS has also tightened its grip on the provision of other services, such as health and educational services. Meanwhile, the group imposes fees on local companies, effectively benefiting from any economic activity in its areas.

All of this has been taking place in tandem with rising prices for all foodstuff and food supplies, while the people's purchasing power has steadily declined due to the prevalent unemployment and skyrocketing poverty levels, especially in areas housing IDPs camps. Moreover, wages have also been falling, whereas the service and health sector face a grueling funding crisis in light of mounting humanitarian needs.

The cities and towns of the northern and eastern Aleppo suburbs have seen demonstrations protesting the increases in electricity prices charged by its suppliers from Turkey. Also, the cities and towns of Afrin, Marea, Souran, al-Bab, and Jendeires in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate saw popular protests on June 3 against the Syrian-Turkish Energy Company (STE) which supplies the area with power. [These protests took place after the company refused popular demands](#) to reduce electricity rates and decrease the number of austerity hours. In some areas, the protests were confronted with live gunfire by Turkish forces, resulting in injuries and the death of one protestor who was a fighter with the faction Ahrar al-Sharqiya. The protests were accompanied by the vandalism and fires breaking out in some of the company's offices.

45. Connects the areas of Idlib and the northern and northwestern suburbs of Aleppo, which are under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS, with the areas under the control of the SNA in Aleppo suburbs.

46. Connects Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo (the city is under joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS) with Afrin area in the western suburbs of Aleppo, which is under the control of the SNA.

In the last quarter of 2022 following HTS' offensive on the territories of the armed opposition factions in mid-October, in which HTS took control of al-Hamran crossing connecting the SNA's territories and the SDF's, the [Salvation Government issued a decision](#) to cease its licensing of fuel companies, further exacerbating the fuel crisis throughout northwestern Syria.

Meanwhile, SNA forces continued their restrictive policies against the owners of olive groves in the area of Afrin and its suburbs, most of whom are of Kurdish ethnicity. SNA forces have been imposing fees and royalties on olive groves and olive oil presses in the area. We also documented more olive trees and forested areas being cut down by SNA factions to provide firewood, a policy that has been implemented by the armed opposition in those areas for years.

Lastly, in the areas run by the SDF in northeastern Syria, the living and economic conditions rapidly declined throughout 2022 for a number of reasons, such as:

- The increasing prices for foodstuff, food supplies, and fuel, which was generally due to the declining value of the Syrian Pound, as sellers controlled prices with the absence of a regulatory body to regulate the markets. We also recorded the smuggling of goods to other territories, with the checkpoints of the Syrian regime and the SDF both taking advantage of this by imposing fees in exchange for the entry of goods. Particularly in Deir Ez-Zour, price increases were introduced due to the rampant smuggling to regime's territories via river crossings.
- The market also suffered shortages or an outright absence of basic goods, such as bread and sugar following a surprising 30 percent price increase for flour compared to its former prices at the beginning of 2022. Moreover, the shutdown of the Semalka Border Crossing with Iraqi Kurdistan also adversely affected the markets.
- In tandem with these problems, unemployment rates continued rising. According to a report released by [the Reach Initiative](#) on July 18 that touched on the humanitarian and living conditions in Hasaka governorate, most of the families living in the governorate, both IDPs and residents, are struggling to meet their basic needs under a deteriorating economy. The report added that nearly 90 percent of all families in the area are facing difficulties in securing enough food because they do not have enough money.

Even worse, the state of insecurity and rampant administrative corruption have further crippled service sectors that have failed to meet the needs of civilians, especially for drinking water, electricity, and agricultural sector needs. The controlling forces have made no visible effort to improve the inadequate and unhealthy drinking water supply, with water being pumped directly from the Euphrates River into households without going through any filtration, treatment or purification process since most water purification stations have been put out of commission due to technical reasons and a lack of sufficient fuel to run them.

The worsening economic situation has also affected the security situation. In [a report](#) published on February 22, the Associated Press (AP) revealed that many residents are trying to flee the city in light of the economic collapse, rampant unemployment, and the rise of criminal gangs, as well as fears of ISIS returning to the city. Furthermore, as confirmed by Raqqa-based activists, there have been a rise in the rates of youth immigration from SDF-run areas to Turkey and then to European countries in search of jobs and security, fleeing the lack of job opportunities, rampant unemployment, and general harassment by the controlling forces in the area.

We documented demonstrations breaking out in the cities, towns, and villages of Deir Ez-Zour throughout the year demanding improvements in the living situation and the release of detainees.

In the last third of March, the SDF-controlled territories in Deir Ez-Zour witnessed a teacher strike prompted by the poor wages and rampant corruption in the SDF's Education Committee, in addition to the inadequate school buildings that need renovation and educational equipment. Indeed, conditions in the educational sector have been noticeably worsening due to corruption and the fact that more and more young teachers are fleeing from the military conscription policies imposed by the SDF. In August, Manbej city in eastern Aleppo suburbs also saw protests against the SDF's practices, particularly against its child abductions. Additionally, the market was hit by widespread stagnation with fears of potential clashes with Turkish forces in the area. On October 20, a number of demonstrations broke out in al-Shaitat area and Nahiyal al-Kasra, lasting for five days. The protests called for improved living conditions, raising teachers' wages, and cancelling the decision by the SDF's Education Commission to ban the wearing of the niqab in the schools in the SDF's areas of control.

Breaches of the sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime



In a blatant breach of the Caesar Act of 2019 and of the international sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime, a number of the states supporting the Syrian regime have signed agreements of an economic nature with the Syrian regime. For instance, on January 12, according to [SANA](#), Fadi Khalil, the head of the Syrian regime government's Commission for Planning and International Cooperation, and Feng Biao, China's Ambassador to Syria, signed a memorandum of understanding which came as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Commenting on the signing in a statement reported by [SANA](#) Fadi Khalil stated that "Syria joining the initiative strengthens the collaboration between Syria and China across a number of fields such as facilitating trade exchange and reconstructing infrastructure, electrical power, and alternative energy." On the same day, SANA reported a statement by Tareq Ismail, General Director of the Water Institution in Latakia, who said that a Russian company had been contracted to handle a project worth 200 billion S.P. to transport water from the Tishrin Dam to Latakia city. On January 15, according to [Iran's Fars News](#), Rustum Qasimi, the head of the Iranian side of the Joint Iranian-Syrian Economic Committee, revealed that new agreements had been reached with the Syrian side, following a visit to Damascus by Iranian regime officials, involving the launch of a joint bank. As such, Qasimi said that branches of local banks will be opened in each country.

On January 27, the [Wall Street Journal](#) published an investigative report revealing that representatives from the Central Bank of Syria had visited the UAE to discuss the opening of a channel through which Syrian importers can pay for international exports via UAE-based accounts, so as to avoid direct money transfers which might be obstructed due to the sanctions on the Syrian regime. The investigation revealed that Cham Wings Airlines, one of the companies sanctioned by the US administration, had begun operating direct flights from Damascus to Abu Dhabi. Furthermore, the report said that the al-Katerji Group, another US-sanctioned group, is using Dubai-based shell companies to buy the computer supplies necessary to open a new bank in Syria.

On July 19, the [Middle East Eye](#) website reported that the United Nations has continued contracting in Syria with companies with ties to the President of the Syrian regime, Bashar Assad, through their purchase of 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 had spent a total of \$81.6 million at the Four Seasons Hotel in Damascus since 2014, with Samer al Fawz, who is on the European Union (EU) and US sanctions lists and is close to the Assad family, owning the largest stake in the hotel, in which the Syrian regime government's Ministry of Tourism also owns a share.

Syria became one of the world's largest exporters of drugs in 2022



Since the popular uprising began, the Syrian regime has employed every resource at its disposal to wage a war on its own people, and eliminate political dissidents, as well as the communities that became bases for the popular movement. This policy only intensified as the popular uprising turned into an internal armed conflict, as the state resources were increasingly depleted. Not only did the Syrian regime exhaust Syria's resources, but its actions also harmed the citizens of other states through exporting narcotics via land and sea, with these exports increasing and expanding after 2018 as the Syrian regime re-established control over wide areas that had been under the control of other parties. It is our belief that the export of these vast quantities of narcotics could not be achieved without the involvement of and support from a highly centralized, highly oppressive regime like Syria's, requiring the full complicity of high-ranking regime officials and with facilitations from the ruling regime itself, even with the theatrics of seizing one or two shippings occasionally to give the false image that the regime is combating drugs.

In 2022, we monitored [dozens of statements by different Jordanian officials concerning efforts to thwart attempts to smuggle narcotics into Jordanian territory, such as captagon, marijuana, and tramadol](#). The year 2022 in particular saw a significant expansion of the drug trade in Syria. Many investigative reports have concluded that these operations are carried out under the auspices of the head of the Syrian regime Bashar Assad and his brother Maher, the head of the regime army's infamous Fourth Division, who has been deploying his forces to source, manufacture, and market narcotics. According to a report by the [French newspaper Le Monde](#) published on January 23, entitled, 'Assad à la tête du trafic de captagon au Moyen-Orient' (Assad at the forefront of Captagon trafficking in the Middle East), Maher Assad who has been accused of committing many murders and other crimes in Syria, is the executive head at the top of the Syrian regime's drug manufacturing and trafficking network.

On April 5, the New Lines Institute published [a report](#) on the same issue. "The illicit production, trade, and consumption of captagon has become deeply embedded into Syria's wartime economy," the report noted, adding that figures closely connected to the Syrian regime are using regime-affiliated armed groups active in Syrian territory to regulate the trafficking of captagon, including the Lebanese Hezbollah group which plays a primary role in drug-smuggling. The report also discussed pro-regime businessmen who play key roles in manufacturing captagon, taking advantage of their access to the state resources and infrastructure in these operations, as well as enjoying the military protection of the Syrian regime, including Assad family members.

On June 21, the German newspaper Der Spiegel published an [investigative feature](#) about the involvement of the Syrian regime's President Bashar Assad, members of his family, and individuals close to them in the international narcotics trade. The newspaper investigation revealed that the head of the Syrian regime is effectively using drug money to finance his rule. The article in Der Spiegel quoted Joel Rayburn, the former United States Special Envoy for Syria, who said that Syria under Bashar Assad has become a narco-state, with captagon pills being its most important export. The investigation added that the name of Bashar Assad's brother, Maher Assad, often appears in documentation, confirming his responsibility for transporting drug shipments, as well as confirming that the Fourth Division which he heads has turned into a mafia-like conglomerate with a military arm that guards drug shipments and factories, controls the ports, and processes large amounts of drug money.

In fact, Syria is now the source of 80 percent of all captagon worldwide according to an investigative report published on November 3 by the [Agence France-Presse \(AFP\)](#), which estimates that the captagon trade is worth at least three times Syria's national budget.

On December 23, 2022, US President Joe Biden signed the National Defense Authorization Act into effect.⁴⁷ The Act includes paragraphs calling on the various US agencies to put together a joint strategy to dismantle the captagon network established by the regime in Syria. "The captagon trade linked to the regime of Bashar al- Assad in Syria is a transnational security threat," the act notes. The act also demands that the US administration develops and implements a strategy to "dismantle Assad-linked narcotics production and trafficking network." According to the National Defense Act for 2023, the US Departments of State, the US Department of Defense, and the US Department of Treasury, along with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), are set to devise an interagency vision to achieve the goal of dismantling and disrupting the captagon network in Syria within six months of the President's approval of the law.

This necessarily entails that the US has acknowledged the Syrian regime's responsibility for manufacturing, selling and promoting illegal narcotic substances. SNHR supports the decision to formulate a law aimed at dismantling the captagon networks, and taking additional procedures to hold the regime accountable and end its impunity.

47. US Congress, H.R.6265 - CAPTAGON Act <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6265/text>

Forced displacement



The ongoing, horrific violations taking place in Syria for almost 12 years to date are by far the primary cause of creating more refugees. Nearly half of the Syrian population are today IDPs and refugees. These people will not be afforded a safe return to their homes without a political transition to democracy. According to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#), Syria's border with Turkey is the world's second-largest refugee gateway after the border between the US and Mexico. Furthermore, Syria is the world's fifth most numerous country of origin for people seeking asylum, only surpassed by China, Russia, Mexico, and India. It is extremely important to note, however, that those four countries all have vastly larger populations than Syria.

The levels of violence against civilians seen in Syria at the hands of all parties to the conflict and controlling forces across the entire country have given rise to a well-founded, deep-rooted state of fear and terror in Syrians' hearts and minds, prompting them to desperately seek safer areas, as the indiscriminate bombardment, especially by the Syrian-Russian alliance, has destroyed most of Syria's cities to the point that they have become clearly uninhabitable. Adding to this suffering, the persecution by the Syrian regime's security apparatus against Syrian dissidents has led to the displacement of thousands of Syrians to other countries. Thirdly, the suffocating sieges enforced by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces on many areas continue to be followed by compulsory reconciliations displacing thousands of individuals from their original areas. The displacement waves of 2022 should be seen as an urgent warning of the threat to the lives of approximately 7 million Syrian IDPs. As we have documented, there were a number of causes for the year's displacement waves, including:

- Targeting of both official and random IDP camps, in bombardment that was deliberate in some cases, and indiscriminate in others. We have documented that such attacks were carried out by Syrian regime forces, Russian forces, and the SDF.
- Bombardment of cities and areas that had previously agreed to security settlements. We documented incidents in which Syrian regime forces bombarded areas under their control whose residents had agreed to security settlements.
- Clashes in populated areas. This year saw an offensive by the HTS against SNA factions that took place in populated areas, in addition to infighting between SNA factions.

In addition, the mere existence of ammunition depots and military headquarters in populated areas, or areas housing IDP camps or shelters poses a direct danger to innocent civilians' lives. SNHR urges all concerned parties to relocate any facilities of this nature to remote areas with no civilian presence or any operational vital facilities. The controlling forces bear the responsibility for relocating those depots and military sites.

Indeed, all the parties to the conflict have targeted residents who were originally displaced in their military attacks. It is noteworthy that most IDPs in northwestern Syria have been displaced more than once.

[According to a report released by the UNHCHR](#) on December 22, Syria has the world's largest IDPs population with 6.8 million people. In 2023, the report estimates, 15.3 million people in Syria will be in need of humanitarian assistance including 2.1 million IDPs living in camps.

On the subject of IDPs and their living and humanitarian conditions, the already extreme suffering of IDPs in northwestern Syria has further intensified, especially given the worsening economic situation and the mounting humanitarian needs that have reached record levels, all made worse by the steady decline in support from relief groups to meet those needs. Meanwhile, there is an almost complete lack of job opportunities, aggravated by substantially weakened purchasing power, especially for IDPs living in camps. On April 9, the World Food Program informed humanitarian organizations operating in northwestern Syria via email that, [as of May 2022](#), the size of the food ration for each family would be reduced as follows: 5.7 kg of bulgur reduced to 5 kg after adjustment; 7.5 kg of rice reduced to 5 kg; 6 kg of red lentils reduced to 5 kg; 6 kg of chickpeas reduced to 5 kg, while maintaining the other materials at their previous quantities, so that the adjusted food ration provides 1,170 calories for each person, assuming an average of five members in each family. It is worth noting that [this was not the first time such a reduction had been imposed](#), even though the people reliant on these food baskets have been further adversely affected by the absence of job opportunities and the rampant unemployment.

The health sector has also not been exempt from the fallout of the worsening economy. Amnesty International [said](#) on May 5, "Dwindling international aid to north-west Syria this past year has left approximately 3.1 million people, including 2.8 million internally displaced people, facing a health crisis as hospitals and other medical facilities struggle to operate on low resources." The organization added that due to the overall reduction of international assistance to Syria, international aid to the health sector fell by more than 40 percent. The organization quoted four hospital directors in the northwest region of Syria, who said that their facilities faced imminent closure if the necessary funding were not urgently secured.

In northeastern Syria, we received information about the spread of meningitis and leishmaniasis among the residents of randomly erected IDP camps⁴⁸ in the northern and eastern suburbs of Raqqa amid blatant negligence by the Health Committee of the SDF's Raqqa Civilian Council. Matters went from bad to far worse with the spread of cholera, especially in the last quarter of the year, as the suffering of civilians intensified in light of the shortage of drinking water and the lack of activity by relief groups that should be providing humanitarian assistance to the IDPs and contributing to improving their food security. As if all this were not enough, the UN decided to reduce relief aid. Indeed, we have recorded [deaths of children](#) as a result of medical negligence, poor living conditions, and inadequate medical capabilities in the camps of northeastern Syria.

48. Dozens of injuries were recorded in the camps of Hweyat al-Sawafi, al-Khayyala, Ratla, al-Rashid, and Tal al-Samn, in Raqqa suburbs. Those camp house hundreds if IDP families who were displaced from the areas of control of Syrian regime forces in the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo.

Meanwhile, extreme weather conditions have worsened the living conditions in the affected camps in northern Syria, whose residents have to grapple with [harsh blizzards, gale-force winds, and rainstorms, and the resultant torrential flooding that uproots tents. The floodwaters ruin the contents of IDPs' tents, submerging them underwater or completely destroying them, and shutting down the roads leading to the camps](#), whose already traumatized residents face further displacement as a result. In summer, meanwhile, the searing heat, lack of clean water and lack of insulated shelters leads to the spread of diseases that emerge in hot weather, especially among children and the elderly. On February 10, the UNHCR released [an update](#) on the humanitarian situation in northwestern Syria, noting that over 250,000 people had been grappling with the harsh weather conditions in hundreds of areas in the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib, northwestern Syria since January 18. The report added that approximately 10,000 of the tents sheltering IDPs had been destroyed or heavily damaged by the extreme weather conditions.



Water pools between IDPs tents in al-Bal'a Camp, Sahl al-Rouj, Idlib in the aftermath of a rainstorm - October 20, 2022

We also documented [fires breaking out in camps](#), whose residents find themselves forced to use refined fuel that is wholly unsuited to heating and dangerously combustible or due to the [misuse of cooking and heating utensils](#), as well as the explosion of solar cells due to high temperatures. [Those fires have led to the loss of human lives, including children.](#)

In eastern Hasaka city near the Iraqi-Syrian borders, **al-Hawl Camp** houses approximately 60,000 people, including former ISIS members' families of various nationalities. The camp is a detention camp run by the SDF, whose residents live under inhumane conditions. On September 9, the US Forces Central Command issued [a statement](#) following a visit by General Michael Eric Corella to the camp in northeastern Syria. The statement said that about 56,000 people, more than 90 percent of whom are women and children, are currently living in tents in the camp under difficult climatic conditions, adding that nearly 70 percent of the camp population are children under the age of 12, which makes them vulnerable to radicalization due to the poor living conditions they suffer. The statement indicated that there is no military solution to the threat posed by the ISIS members in Al-Hawl Camp, adding that the most suitable permanent solution is for countries that have nationals in the camp to bring their citizens home, rehabilitate and reintegrate them into their communities.

On August 25, the SDF launched [a campaign](#) under the label 'security and humanity' in al-Hawl Camp, the aim of which was to search for ISIS cells. On the next day, the group [announced](#) that 27 ISIS members have been arrested in the Camp's first sector. On September 17, SDF announced that the campaign has been concluded, with the arrest of 226 civilians, including 36 women, suspected to be working with ISIS cells.

At the beginning of the year, the SDF allowed a batch of people to leave the camp.⁴⁹ Since then, we recorded a second batch in 2022 - the 23rd group to be allowed to leave the camp since resolution 146 in August. In total, around 130 families left al-Hawl Camp in 2022 in two batches (of 53 and 73 respectively), while 2021 saw 15 batches comprising 1,200 families in total to leave it. On a related note, several countries repatriated their nationals, in coordination with the SDF with most of these repatriated being women and children from families with ties to ISIS who live in al-Hawl Camp and Rouh Camp in Hasaka suburbs. Those countries include Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Russia, Britain, Azerbaijan, and Iraq.

Meanwhile, **al-Rukban Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian border** houses approximately 7,500 people, all civilians. Since 2019, the camp's residents have been living under a crippling siege imposed by Syrian regime forces and affiliated pro-regime Iranian militias, who block the entry of basic goods such as fuel and firewood, as well as food supplies, including vegetables and flour, with the residents grappling with a severe shortage of those goods and of water. Adding to the residents suffering, prices for any goods that can reach the camp have reached record levels. On April 3, 2022, [Anadolu Agency](#) reported that Jens Laerke, the Deputy Spokesperson for the OHCHR,⁵⁰ had revealed that no humanitarian assistance convoys have accessed the area since September 2019.

49. Pursuant to resolution 146, issued by the SDF's Self-Administration on October 10, 2022, which allows for Syrians to leave the camp after completing the required procedures. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WhkCOLJUA84E2PLIGetr94scjqajlo_d/view?usp=sharing

Indeed, the residents of al-Rukban Camp suffer from an almost complete lack of any form of healthcare and severe shortage of basic food supplies. The life-threatening high temperature only deepened their suffering in July and August last year because of the results of the decision to reduce the already inadequate rations of drinking water almost by half, with these rations delivered via the Jordanian borders with the support of the UNICEF. On August 3, we issued [an urgent appeal](#) to end the suffering of the thousands of people living in the camp due to the drinking water shortage.



Al-Rukban Camp residents holding a protest calling for an end to the siege imposed by Syrian regime forces and for improvements to their living conditions in the camp - August 8, 2022

On the subject of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, [a report by the UN Human Rights Council](#) on May 11 said that Syrian refugees in Lebanon are facing a somber reality, with the treatment of Syrian refugees by the host communities in Lebanon manifested in “discrimination, harassment, violence and remarks akin to hate speech.” The report added that Syrian refugees have been denied access to shops selling subsidized items, as well as being subjected to forced evictions, violence and assaults, and have had their homes burnt down. Some municipalities have gone so far as to introduce discriminatory curfews and wage limits for Syrians. The report added that 57 percent of Syrian refugees live in dangerous, substandard or overcrowded housing. In the same context, the [Access Center for Human Rights \(ACHR\)](#)⁵⁰ published a statement on May 18 in which it documented six individual cases of forced eviction, and more than three cases of mass forced evictions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The statement indicated that these cases constitute a clear violation of Lebanese law.

50. ACHR is a non-profit, non-government human rights organization headquartered in Beirut and Paris. It was founded in 2017, in Lebanon, and was re-established in Paris, in 2020.

On September 9, SNHR released [a joint press release](#) with a number of other human rights groups on the situation related to the Syrian detainees and prisoners in Lebanon. The statement shed light on the case of the Syrian refugee Bashar Abdel Saoud who was arrested by Lebanon's State Security service on August 30, 2022. Bashar subsequently died due to torture at the hands of Lebanese security officers.

Lastly, on December 16, the UN Refugee Agency, World Food Programme, and UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) released [a joint statement](#), revealing the initial findings of the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon ([VASyR](#)), which showed a sharp and continued deterioration in the living conditions of all Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The statement went on to reveal that 90 percent of Syrian refugees need humanitarian assistance to stay alive, adding that the assessment had found that lack of food security is one of the most alarming issues for Syrian refugee families, with the report further noting that Syrian refugees reduce their already inadequate food intake to feed family members, with adults eating less in order to allow their children to eat, and spending less on healthcare and education in order to prioritize buying food.

Under instructions from its Russian sponsors and allies, the Syrian regime is using the refugees issue to blackmail European states into contributing to the issue of reconstruction

Russia is trying to promote a false narrative, claiming that Syria, or rather those territories under the control of the Syrian regime, are safe and stable, and; as such, ready to take back returning refugees. In doing so, Russia is trying to break the isolated state of the Syrian regime and blackmail European states through the far-right parties with which Russia and the Syrian regime are allied to promote the idea of returning Syrian refugees to Syria in return for contributing to the reconstruction file, using the entirely false argument that the damaged buildings and vital facilities in Syria are the reason why refugees are unable to return to the country.

Russia is deliberately ignoring the fact that the bombardment by its own forces and those of its ally, the Syrian regime, are the primary cause of the displacement of millions of Syrians, along with the barbaric security apparatus that controls every aspect of Syrians' lives.

Under Russia's tutelage, the Syrian regime has continued its campaign focusing on the issue of "returning refugees" by holding a series of meetings and events such as the so-called, ['the International Conference on Return of Syrian Refugees'](#), the most recent of which was [the fourth conference](#), held on June 14, 2022. The Russian and Syrian regime are turning a blind eye to the devastating impact of their own actions which have been and continue to be the cause of Syria's destruction and of the displacement of millions of Syrians.

It has become a standard strategy of the Syrian regime's to promote the repatriation of refugees and IDPs in order to give the appearance of accelerating the early recovery processes in the hopes of receiving funds. In this context, [SANA](#) published pictures showing civilians returning to Ma'aret al-Nu'man city in the southern suburbs of Idlib on October 15. "Over 800 families returned to Ma'aret al-Nu'man city, Idlib suburbs," the report reads, "after terrorism was eradicated from the city and basic services were secured." However, some of the residents who returned earlier in October told SNHR that the city is destroyed, and that it had been the target of mass lootings, which left it uninhabitable.



Photo taken by local residents at the start of October 2022 highlighting the heavy destruction to the al-Umayy Mosque, known as 'al-Masjid al-Kabir,' in Ma'aret al-Nu'man city

The residents added that they had been forced to pay a sum of \$5,000 and to obtain permission from the Political Security branch in Hama before they were allowed to return. The residents also revealed that the coordination committee notified Ma'aret al Nu'man's residents, as well as the residents of other Syrian regime-held towns in the area around the city, to travel to the city, in order to appear in pictures and videos filmed for the media. The residents were threatened with negative consequences should they refuse, whether they were government employees or ordinary civilians.

On December 20, the Syrian regime allowed some families to return to Ein al-Feja village after they had obtained security clearance from the regime's Military Security division and the National Guard Security Office. As a condition of the residents' return, however, the regime requires that they would not carry out any repairs or modifications to their houses. Some of the residents who we have spoken with told us that living in their houses in their current condition is effectively impossible after they were bombed and looted. The Syrian regime took advantage of these returns to promote its supposed efforts to return IDPs to their original areas. [SANA](#) reported that the residents "held popular celebrations in the town square with popular and official participation" on being allowed to return to their homes and lands after "they were displaced for years because of terrorism." It should be noted that the residents and local fighters were forcibly displaced from the Wadi Barada area in Western Ghouta, Damascus suburbs by regime forces back in January 2017.

Refugee waves continue as violations are still being perpetrated, Syria is not a safe haven for its habitants nor for the return of refugees

While the Syrian regime and its Russian ally continued promoting their narratives about a supposedly “safe” Syria, and despite the persecution refugees are experiencing in their asylum countries, we actually documented increasing waves of migration in and from Syria. We believe this to be an outcome of the following:

- Serious human rights violations are still being committed by the various parties to the conflict, primarily by the Syrian regime and its allies.
- Military operations are still being carried out by the various parties to the conflict across Syria.
- The deteriorating economic, living, and humanitarian situation throughout Syria. This is only natural after 12 years of conflict. In fact, the COI's most recent report noted that 2022 was the worst year Syria has seen to date from an economic and humanitarian standpoint since the start of the popular uprising in Syria.⁵¹ The same report stressed that Syria is unsafe for the return of refugees.⁵²

With the refugee situation also continuing to worsen in neighboring countries, especially Lebanon followed by Turkey, we documented more illegal, and extremely dangerous, migration attempts towards EU states, either on land via Turkey or on sea via the Mediterranean Sea setting out from Turkey, Lebanon, or Maghreb states. On October 25, [the IOM](#) reported that the organization's Missing Migrants Project has documented no fewer than 5,684 deaths on migration routes to and within Europe since 2021 started. Syrians were among those identified as dead.

On July 25, Amnesty International revealed in [a statement](#) that since July 14, 50 asylum seekers - 47 Syrians and three Palestinians, including children and women - had been stranded in harsh conditions on one of the islands of the Evros River separating Turkey and Greece, without food or safe drinking water.

On August 15, the [International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#) issued a press release saying that a group of 39 Syrian refugees remained trapped on a small islet in the Evros river. The IRC called for their immediate evacuation and warned that illegal pushbacks in Greece and across the EU are costing lives. On the same day, [Reuters](#) reported that Greek police had located 38 Syrian refugees in the Lavara area of Evros, including one pregnant woman and seven children. The agency added that the refugees had been trapped for days on a small islet in the Evros river along the border between Greece and Turkey.

51. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). (2022). Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/51/45>

52. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). (2022). Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/51/45>

In September 2022., we documented that no fewer than 55 Syrian drowned when a boat carrying them along with other passengers from different Arabic nationalities, mostly Lebanese and Palestinian, overturned in the Mediterranean near the Syrian coast. The boat had set off on the morning of Tuesday, September 20, from the city of Tripoli in Lebanon towards Europe. On Thursday September 22, 2022, some of the bodies of those who had been aboard began surfacing near the Syrian island of Arwad. In a statement about the incident, Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees called it “another tragedy”, [calling on](#) the international community “to help improve the conditions of forcibly displaced people and host communities in the Middle East”. On the same day, [Stéphane Dujarric](#), Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, said in his daily press briefing from the UN official headquarters in New York that what makes this tragic situation worse is that “we know that such incidents can be prevented if states manage the flow of people, migrants and refugees in a coordinated manner [and] if people are not left in the hands of criminal gangs and smugglers.”

On September 12, [Reuters](#) reported that the bodies of six Syrians, including three children, had been found on a boatload of asylum-seekers that had arrived at the port of Potsalo on the island of Sicily. The agency quoted Chiara Cardolletti, the representative of UNHCR in Italy, as saying that the victims had «died of thirst, hunger and severe burns.» Furthermore, on October 15, the [AP](#) reported on October 15 that 92 asylum seekers had been forced by Turkish authorities to cross into Greece, according to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also known as Frontex, and the Greek police. According to sources cited by Reuters, the Greek police found the refugees naked, with some of them bearing “bodily injuries.” The report stated that most of the 92 refugees were Syrians and Afghans. On October 16, the [UNHCR](#) tweeted about the incident, calling for a “full investigation into the incident.”

SNHR stresses that the Syrian regime and its allies are the parties responsible for forcing the Syrian people to risk their lives in illegal migration attempts in the hopes of finding a safer country that can afford them the most basic requirements for a decent life.

Deporting refugees and forcibly returning asylum seekers constitute violations of international law

No government has the right to unilaterally assess the situation in Syria, and then use its own assessment to make decision regarding deporting Syrian refugees back to Syria. This responsibility, namely assessing the situation in Syria, falls upon the UNHCR, the COI, international human rights group, and the active and expert local groups that work on documenting human rights violations in Syria. To that end, all those bodies have confirmed that Syria is an unsafe country.

We, at SNHR, have reiterated in dozens of reports, which are further corroborated by the COI, that returning refugees have suffered the same types of violations committed against those who remained in Syria, and for the very same reason: the absence of law in the country and the prevalence of oppression, despotism, and autocratic authorities. There will be no free and dignified return for refugees without bringing about a political transition to a genuinely democratic government that respects human rights.

On January 10, [the Netherlands-based Trouw newspaper](#) published an investigative report revealing that the Danish policy towards Syrian asylum seekers, namely insisting that parts of Syria are safe and that Denmark will therefore return incoming asylum seekers to those areas, has prompted hundreds of Syrian asylum seekers to leave Denmark for other, safer European countries. According to the report, 400 Syrians have left Denmark for Germany, Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, a number of European countries have attempted to deport refugees to a third country. One of these nations is the United Kingdom which tried to transfer a group of refugees, including Syrian ones, to Rwanda. HRW stressed that Rwanda is an unsafe country whose own citizens also face serious human rights violations. These practices have met with harsh criticism, some of it from UK government officials. On June 14, the European Court of Human Rights [issued a ruling](#) in favor of halting those deportations. Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, [said](#) on June 7 that “there are serious risks that the international law principle of non-refoulement will be breached by forcibly transferring asylum seekers to Rwanda.”

On October 24, HRW released [a report](#) revealing that Turkish authorities had arrested, detained, and deported hundreds of Syrian refugee men and children in an arbitrary manner between February and July 2022, including children unaccompanied by their families. The report stressed that this constitutes a violation of international law. Additionally, HRW said that the depiction of Turkey as a safe third country is inconsistent with its deporting Syrian refugees to northern Syria on this scale.

On July 4, the [Lebanese National News Agency](#) reported that Issam Sharaf El-Din, Minister of the Displaced in the Lebanese caretaker government, had 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](#) stated on July 6 that the forcible return of Syrian refugees by the Lebanese authorities is illegal and unsafe, 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 September 8, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Najib Mikati, [addressed a letter](#) to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, in which he said that Lebanon «calls without delay for the implementation of the international mechanisms contained in the texts adopted by the High Commissioner for Refugees and its Executive Council on the return of refugees».

On October 13, [Alhurra](#) website cited a statement from Dalal Harb, UNHCR Communication Officer and Spokesperson, in which she said, “The UNHCR is not currently facilitating or encouraging a large-scale voluntary return for refugees from Lebanon to Syria.” Amnesty International, meanwhile, released [a statement](#) on October 14, in which the human rights group warned that “In enthusiastically facilitating these returns, the Lebanese authorities are knowingly putting Syrian refugees at risk of suffering from heinous abuse and persecution upon their return to Syria.”

On October 26, [France Press](#) reported that a batch of Syrian refugees had left Lebanon, returning to Syria as part of the Lebanese government’s plan to return Syrian refugees, which is being carried out in coordination with the Syrian regime. The agency reported that 750 Syrian refugees had returned to Syria. On the same day, [SANA](#) reported that a batch of Syrian refugees has crossed into Syria via the al-Dabousia border crossing. When asked about the Lebanon-run repatriation of Syrian refugees to Syria at [a press conference](#) on October 26, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, responded, “Well, this ongoing repatriation is not facilitating... is not being organized by UNHCR... So, UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation, but they are not directly involved in this.”

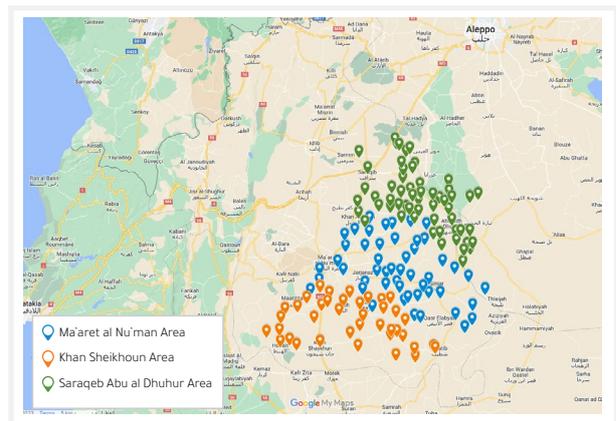
Meanwhile, Danish news website [The Local](#) reported on November 15 that Syrian refugees whose residency is set to be cancelled will still be at risk should they be returned to their country. Citing sources from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and other humanitarian organization, the article reported that Danish immigration authorities are failing to factor in the reports on the violations against the Syrian refugees who return to Syria when making decisions about renewing Syrian refugees’ residencies.

The Syrian regime legitimizes property theft and seizes the properties of forcibly displaced people through auctions

The Syrian regime continues to excel itself in criminality, committing additional egregious violations whose impact further impoverishes and traumatizes refugees and IDPs even well after they've been forced to leave their homes. This is clearly shown in the arbitrary laws passed by the regime over the years, through which [it seeks to legalize the looting and theft of lands, crops, and properties belonging to refugees and IDPs](#). In 2022, the regime continued to seize lands and properties through legislative procedures that merely feign the appearance of legality. We have documented continuing seizures of lands belonging to refugees and IDPs by the regime, which attempts to legitimize these blatant crimes through the tactic of 'auctions'.

On September 29, 2022, the General Secretariat of Idlib Governorate announced three upcoming public auctions of property, including agricultural land in the suburbs of Idlib Governorate. The announcements included notification of public auctions for investment in agricultural land for a full agricultural season. The announcements, which were entitled 'Auction announcement at full speed,' specified that the areas of land being auctioned might increase or decrease in size. These lands would be handed over to the purchasers through the presentation of official deeds organized by the special committee. The announcements did not specify the locations of these lands or the names of their owners. Instead, they provided the names of the regions and villages affected by the auction, along with the area offered for auction. The announcements gave the location of the auction itself as taking place in 'the Temporary Building of Idlib Governorate in Khan Sheikhoun'. The first such auction included Khan Sheikhoun area, the second was for Ma'aret al-Nu'man, and the third for Saraqeb Abu al-Duhour. According to [Thaer Salhab](#), the regime-appointed official quoted earlier, the lands being sold at the public auctions belong to the "people in hiding in the north of Syria".

As SNHR's team has documented, the area of the land, including agricultural lands, in rural Idlib governorate, offered to would-be 'investors' at public auctions to date has reached at least 570,000 dunums (1 dunum = 1,000 square meters). The interactive map below shows the locations of the most notable villages and towns named in the three auctions.



On October 20, SNHR released [a report entitled, 'The Syrian Regime Announces New Auctions of Lands in Idlib Province Belonging to Displaced Persons and Refugees With the Aim of Seizing Them'](#), stressing that the seizure of the lands and properties of displaced people through these deceitful means is a crime of theft that qualifies as a war crime. The regime seizing properties of hundreds of thousands of Syrian dissidents perpetuates the process of evacuation and enforced displacement, and is an attempt at demographic reengineering that essentially impedes the return of refugees and IDPs.

VI. Most Notable Incidents in the Arenas of Politics, Military, Human Rights, and Investigations With Respect to Syria in 2022

This is an attempt to show how political developments paralleled with the developments on the ground in order to better understand the reality in Syria. This, however, is not by any mean a justification for human rights violation no matter what form it took.

A. Political developments

On January 11, a number of members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the US Congress and the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations sent [a letter](#) to US President Joe Biden demanding that the US Administration take a stronger stand on preventing the Syrian regime from being reintegrated into the international community without accountability. The letter added that the crimes committed by the Syrian regime, including Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians with the support of Russia and Iran, have been well-documented. The signatories urged President Biden to utilize the appropriate deterrence policy in the Caesar Act in order to isolate the Syrian regime at the international level.

On January 12, the German website [DW](#) reported that Germany's cabinet had agreed to extend the mandate of the German forces fighting ISIS. The resolution included amendments such as officially eliminating Syria as an operation zone for the German army, and extending the deployment of German forces in Iraq for nine months.

On January 27, Martin Griffiths, [the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator](#), said during a briefing session on the developments regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria that we are "~~failing the Syrian people, young and old,~~" stressing that civilians are still being killed in the context of the conflict in Syria.

On January 31, Edward 'Ned' Price, Spokesperson for the US Department of State, [said in a press conference](#) that the US still believes that the time is not right for the normalization of relationships with the Syrian regime, adding that the present continues to be the time for accountability for the atrocities committed by the regime.

On February 28, Izumi Nakamitsu, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, said in [a briefing](#) to the Security Council on Syria that "any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and the absence of accountability for the past use of such weapons remains a blight on the conscience of the international community.". She added that the OPCW had been trying for 10 months to agree on a date for talks with Damascus, but the Syrian regime's response had remained to deny one of the OPCW's members an entry visa to Syria.

On March 3, the US Department of State's website published [a joint statement](#) with the representatives of France, UK, Norway, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq, and representatives from the EU and the Arab League, following talks on the situation in Syria. The statement affirmed the parties' commitment to a peaceful resolution in Syria on the grounds of Security Council resolution 2254, in a way that ensures the dignity of all Syrians. The statement also stressed that humanitarian assistance must be delivered, and urged the imposition of greater pressure in order to attain accountability for the crimes committed in Syria, especially the use of chemical weapons. The statement also asserted that pressure should be brought to bear on the parties in order to secure the release of arbitrarily arrested detainees and reveal the fate of the missing.

On March 10, [Asharq Al-Awsat](#) newspaper reported that Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, noted that he sensed no consensus among Arab States on the matter of restoring Syria's membership in the Arab League. Those statements came during a press conference which followed the [157th Ordinary Session of the Arab League at the level of permanent delegates](#), held on March 9, at which it was agreed that the next Arab summit should be held in Algeria on November 1-2, 2022.

On March 11, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [said](#) in a statement released to mark the eleventh anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria that the destruction Syrians have witnessed has few equals in modern history. In the statement, he also stressed that there must be no impunity.

On March 15, the US Department of State released [a joint press release](#) with France, Germany, Italy, and the UK to commemorate the eleventh anniversary of the start of the popular uprising in Syria, saying that the time is long overdue for the Syrian regime and its backers, including Russia and Iran, to stop their brutal attack on the Syrian people. The statement asserted that Syrian refugees and IDPs remained unable to return to their home in line with US standards for their safety and wellbeing, without fearing that they would fall victim to violence, arbitrary arrest, and torture. The signatory states also stressed that they would not normalize relations with the Syrian regime or support any other states' efforts to do so, nor would they lift any of the sanctions imposed on the regime. The states also stressed that they would not fund the reconstruction process in Syria until they saw an irreversible progress towards a real political solution in line with Security Council resolution 2254.

On March 16, Josep Borrell the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, released [a statement](#) marking the eleventh anniversary of the start of the popular uprising in Syria, in which he said that Syria remains a priority to the EU. He adds that the international community needs to keep searching for a durable and comprehensive political solution in Syria. The statement reiterated the position of the EU, namely that there could be "no normalization with the Syrian regime, no reconstruction and no lifting of sanctions until a political solution in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254 is firmly underway."

On March 21-25, the [seventh round](#) of the Syrian Constitutional Committee meeting was held in Geneva as part of the political solution in Syria in line with Security Council resolution 2254 under the supervision of Geir Pedersen, the UN special envoy to Syria. No tangible progress was made in the round, with the UN special envoy issuing [a press release](#) on March 25 commenting on the session, in which he noted that while the initial expectations had been that delegations would “submit revisions [on the fifth and final day] to reflect the content of the discussions during the previous four days,” in reality, “all delegations offered at least some revisions to some of the texts presented.”

On April 26, during a briefing to the Security Council, [Geir Pedersen](#) said, “[Although the war in Syria may not be making headlines lately, the international community must remain focused on achieving a comprehensive political solution to the conflict.](#)” He added that Syria remains among the greatest humanitarian crises of the present age, and the biggest displacement crisis in the world, with a whole generation being born and raised in displacement.

On April 29, Jalina Porter, [US Department of State's](#) Principal Deputy Spokesperson, said, “[Syria remains in non-compliance with the CWC.](#)” adding that the US administration will continue to work to hold the Assad regime accountable for its repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people, as well as continuing its efforts to hold Russia accountable for its ongoing efforts to shield the Assad regime from accountability for its chemical weapons use.

On May 9 and 10, the [Brussels VI Conference](#) on ‘Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region,’ organized by the European Union, was held [in the presence of more than 75 delegations from neighboring refugee-hosting countries, partner countries, European Union member states, international and local organizations, including the UN.](#) At its conclusion, the assembled states pledged to provide [6.4 billion euros for 2022 to Syria](#) and the neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees. This sum is far less than the amount required as expressed by the United Nations, which amounted to approximately [\\$10.5 billion](#). We have expressed our regret on several occasions that, while the purpose of holding the conference was to raise funds for the Syrian people, in reality it overlooked the political and human rights failures for which solutions were among the goals of the conference in its early stages, with no serious measures taken at the conference in order to help ensure safety for civilians and put pressure on the actor parties in order to achieve the political transition process or even to achieve any steps on the path of accountability.

On May 12, the US Department of State published [a press release](#) in which it said that the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) allowed authorizing specific economic activities in certain non regime-held areas of northeast and northwest Syria, as part of what it called “[a strategy to defeat ISIS by promoting economic stabilization in areas liberated from the terrorist group's control.](#)” The statement added that the US Treasury does not permit any activity with the Syrian regime's Government or other sanctioned persons.

On May 17, the United States Army Forces Command [published a memorandum](#) on the civilian casualties resulting from the [airstrike](#) launched by the US forces in the vicinity of al Baghouz town, eastern Syria, on March 18, 2019, in which it asserted that “No Rules of Engagement (ROE) or Law of War (LOW) Violations Occurred.” It’s apparent, however, that the U.S. Ground Force Commander (GFC) “relied on data that was not fully accurate,” as “Unbeknownst to the GFC, civilians were within the blast radius resulting in civilian casualties.” [An HRW report](#) comment on the memorandum, published on May 19, stated that it suggests the existence of preventable flaws, including a lack of transparency, a lack of information from witnesses, and a lack of any effort to make amends for the civilians harmed.

On May 30, the [eighth round](#) of meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee began in Geneva, within the framework of the political solution in Syria in accordance with UN Resolution 2254, under the supervision of Geir Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria.

On June 8, Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, said in [a statement](#) during a US Senate Foreign Relations hearing to discuss US foreign policy toward Syria, “We will continue to use all our tools, including the Caesar Act, to press the Assad regime.” She added that achieving enduring peace and stability in Syria will not be possible without justice for the Syrian people.

On June 15-16, the 18th round of the Astana talks was held in the Kazakh capital, Nur-Sultan, with the participation of representatives of the guarantor states (Turkey, Russia, and Iran), a representative of Geir Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy to Syria, a delegation from the Syrian regime, and a representative delegation from the Syrian opposition, in addition to delegations from the countries of Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and representatives of international organizations. On its official website, the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs published [a joint final statement](#) by each of the representatives of the guarantor states (Turkey, Russia, and Iran), which did not contain any decisions or developments. The statement said that the 19th round of the Astana talks on Syria would also be held in Nur-Sultan in the second half of 2022.

The Syrian regime and its Russian ally have continued to work to disrupt any possible political process aimed at a possible political solution in Syria. On June 16, the [Russian Sputnik news agency](#) quoted Alexander Lavrentiev, the Russian Special Presidential Envoy on Syria, who stated that Russia had proposed moving the meeting headquarters of the Syrian Constitutional Committee from Geneva to Muscat or Abu Dhabi, adding that “Algeria is also possible as a platform.” The agency also quoted a previous statement by Ayman Sousan, head of the Syrian regime’s delegation to the Astana 18 conference, in which he said that Geneva “is not a suitable place for the meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.”

On June 20, in [a statement](#) published by the official website of the Lebanese Republic, Najib Mikati, head of the Lebanese caretaker government, asserted that the international community should cooperate with Lebanon to return Syrian refugees there to their country, claiming that “otherwise, Lebanon will have a situation that is not desirable for Western countries, which is to work to remove the Syrians from Lebanon by legal means, through the firm application of Lebanese laws.”

On June 16, the UNHCR issued [a joint press release](#) from a number of UN bodies, calling on Security Council member states to renew Security Council Resolution 2585 authorizing continued cross-border assistance for an additional 12 months, warning that any failure to renew the resolution would have dire humanitarian consequences for the northwest region of Syria.

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 subsequently 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 pursue normalization of relations with the Syrian regime.

On July 16, the website of the office of the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, published [a statement](#) in which he said that as the Special Envoy, he 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. Meanwhile, the Syrian Negotiation Commission’s delegation in the Constitutional Committee also issued [a press release](#) 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 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, at which, according to the final statement published by [the Russian presidential website](#), the three leaders stressed “the necessity to maintain calm on the ground by fully implementing all agreements on Idlib.” The agreement also included a stipulation that the three guarantor states would 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 July 21, the [UN 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 means of ending the renewal if Council members deemed 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 July 31, [The Telegraph](#) reported that the Britain is accused of flouting the law by funding IS prisons in northeastern Syria where people suspected of being affiliated with ISIS, including children, are held. The newspaper said that 750 boys as young as nine, including Westerners, at least one of them a British national, were languishing in this prison without being charged or brought before any court.

On August 1, the US Department of Homeland Security issued [a decision](#) in which it extended the designation of Syria as being among the countries whose citizens, and individuals have no nationality having last habitually resided in Syria, could benefit from temporary protection status in the United States of America, for a period of 18 months, starting on October 1, 2022.

On August 2, 2022, the UN Secretary-General submitted the [UN report](#) to the UN General Assembly pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/228.⁵³ The report recommends that a new international independent body be founded and dedicated to the clarification of the fate and whereabouts of missing people in Syria. This proposed body, according to the proposal, would have a broad mandate and would be designed according to a strategy centered around victims and survivors and inclusive of all families.

On August 4, [HRW](#) reported that the [Netherlands' Council of State ruling](#) issued in July, which stated that Syrian asylum seekers in the Netherlands could not be automatically transferred to Denmark under the European Union's 'Dublin' arrangement, concluding that it cannot be assumed that the prohibition of inhuman treatment is respected by the Danish authorities, a decision that helps protect Syrian asylum seekers in the EU.

On August 10, US President Joe Biden issued [a statement](#) marking the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of American journalist Austin Tice in Damascus on August 13, 2012, holding the Syrian regime responsible for his abduction. In the words of the statement published by the White House website, "We know with certainty that he has been held by the government of Syria." On August 17, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued [a statement](#) describing these statements as "misleading and far from logical," and claiming that the United States of America had "violated the provisions of the Vienna Conventions on consular and diplomatic relations when it turned a blind eye and even encouraged dozens of its citizens to travel to Syria and enter to its territories illegally and to [travel to] the areas with a presence of armed terrorist groups."

On August 21, US Department of State Spokesperson Edward 'Ned' Price issued [a press release](#) on the ninth anniversary of the chemical attack carried out by Syrian regime forces in the two Ghoutas of Damascus suburbs, in which he said that there can be no impunity for those who use chemical weapons and that the United States is using all available tools to promote accountability for such attacks.

On August 30 and 31, representatives of the Arab League, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States [met in Geneva](#) to discuss the crisis in Syria. At the end of the meeting, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis consistent with UN Security Council resolution 2254, as stated in the joint statement published by the US Department of State website on August 31. The statement also added that the participants reaffirmed their continued support for implementing and sustaining an immediate nation-wide ceasefire, for maintaining the Constitutional Committee, and for ensuring free and fair elections in Syria, and the end of arbitrary detention. The statement called on all parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to resume meetings of the Constitutional Committee to advance an inclusive political solution in Syria. The statement also underlined the necessity of continuing to press for accountability for all atrocities and international crimes perpetrated in [Syria, including the use of chemical weapons](#).

53. 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, [Resolution 76/228 - Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic](#).

On September 3, the official Vatican News Agency reported a statement from Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic church, in which he said that the crisis in Syria remains one of the most serious crises in the world, in terms of destruction, increasing humanitarian needs, social and economic collapse, poverty and famine, having reached catastrophic levels, with nearly 14 million people, or nearly half the population affected by the crisis, living in a state of internal displacement or asylum outside the country. In the same context, the [Catholic News Agency](#) reported on the same day a statement by Cardinal Mario Zinari, the representative of the Pope of the Vatican in Syria, saying that «more than 90% of the population in Syria lives below the poverty line, and statistics indicate that many children suffer from hunger or malnutrition.»

On September 13, the [European Union mission to Syria](#) tweeted on its official Twitter account that all Syrians have the right to return to their homes, but so far there is not yet a suitable climate for return, as the conditions must first be provided in accordance with international law for a safe, voluntary and dignified return, and when these conditions exist, the European Union will support the return of refugees and displaced persons organized by the United Nations.

On September 29, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, [said in her briefing](#) to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme in Syria that «no progress has been made with regard to the efforts of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic since the Council's last meeting on this issue.» She added that the Syrian regime had continued to set conditions that prevent the deployment of the United Nations team, which had frustrated the attempts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to organize the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Syrian regime in Damascus.

On October 1, the [Center for National Interest](#)⁵⁴ stated that the Assad regime is “an affront to Western values, a threat to U.S. global influence, and an imminent danger to American national security.” In the article, the author bases his argument on the Assad regime’s relative impunity that has shielded it as it committed war crimes, warning that this sends a dangerous signal to the international community. The author also highlighted the Assad regime’s close relationship with the “terrorist organization” Hezbollah, noting that it had deployed thousands of fighters in support of the Syrian regime. In this way, the article argues, the Syrian regime has funneled Iranian weapons to Hezbollah.

On October 12, the White House announced on its [website](#) that US President Joe Biden has decided to “continue” the state of national emergency declared to address the situation in Syria as related to the “unusual and extraordinary” threat it poses to US national and foreign policy. The state of national emergency gives the US administration the authority to seize the properties of and impose sanctions on individuals proven to bear a responsibility for the instability in Syria. This include disqualifying them from being granted US visas or fund loans.

54. The Center for National Interest is a Washington-based think tank concerned with public policy, which was founded by President Richard Nixon on January 20, 1994.

In mid-October, the Syrian regime revealed the existence of a UNHCR-funded project to rehabilitate the real estate service directorate in Deir Ez-Zour city. SNHR condemns the provision of any financial or logistic support for any of the entities owned by or affiliated with the Syrian regime, noting that most of those funds will go towards committing the most heinous human rights violations, all for the sake of maintaining the regime in power.

UNHCR funds a project to rehabilitate the real estate directorate building in Deir Ez-Zor - October 2022



On November 16, the [Third Committee of the UN General Assembly](#) adopted Resolution A/C.377-L.36 regarding the human rights situation in Syria. The resolution welcomed the UN Secretary-General's proposal to establish a special international body concerned with determining the fate of the missing in Syria.

On November 22-23, the 19th round of the Astana talks was held in the Kazakhstani capital, with representatives of the three guarantor states (Turkey, Russian, Iran) in attendance, as well as a delegation from the Syrian regime and another from the Syrian opposition. The Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs published [a closing statement](#) stressing that the guarantor states are convinced the solution to the crisis in Syria could not be a military one, while affirming their commitment to advancing a viable political process in line with Security Council resolution 2254. The statement also emphasized that the Constitutional Committee should proceed with its activities with no bureaucratic or logistical hinderance. The statement further specified that the 20th meeting will be held in the first half of 2023.

On December 21, Geir Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, said, in [a briefing](#) to the UN Security Council on Syria, that Syrians across the country were facing a humanitarian and economic crisis. Mr. Pedersen added that the areas housing IDPs camp are the worst affected by such crises, noting that the Security Council should act to bring about unfettered humanitarian access to all Syrians in need throughout the country. With regard to the meetings of the constitutional committee, Mr. Pedersen noted that no progress had been made, especially in light of Russia's position on holding these meetings in Geneva city.

On December 21, the Russian state [Russia Today](#) news agency reported on a speech delivered by Mr. Vasily Alekseyevich Nebenzya, Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, during a session held by the UN Security Council to discuss the situation in Syria, in which he claimed the UN "does not provide an appropriate context for discussions about extending the mechanism for delivering aid across the borders," adding that "the arguments for extending the mechanism is unconvincing, because the lack of alternative is made up."

On December 21, Martin Griffiths, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said, in a [briefing](#) on the situation in Syria for the UN Security Council, that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance had risen to 14.6 million, an increase of 1.2 million from 2021.

On December 28, the Turkish Ministry of Defense released [a statement](#) on its official website, in which it revealed that Hulusi Akar, Turkey's Minister of Defense, and Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization, had met with Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Minister of Defense, and Ali Mahmoud Abbas, Syria's Minister of Defense, as well as with the heads of the Russian and Syrian intelligence apparatuses. The statement said that the meeting discussed the Syrian crisis and the issue of refugees, as well as the joint efforts to combat all terrorist organizations in Syria. On December 29, [Russia Today](#) quoted Hulusi Akar, Turkey's Minister of Defense, as saying, "We affirmed that a resolution must be reached for the Syrian crisis that involves all parties in accordance with UN Resolution 2254."

Attempts to revive relations with the Syrian regime despite its involvement in crimes against humanity against the Syrian people

Throughout 2022, Algeria, continuing its efforts from the end of 2021, tried to improve the public relations image of the Syrian regime, visiting a number of Arab states in the hopes of convincing them to vote the Syrian regime back into the Arab League. In these efforts, Algeria has ignored the regime's horrific violations, amounting to crimes against humanity, against the Syrian people. Algeria also seems to have forgotten that the Syrian regime has insulted the Arab League and violated all of its initiatives that aimed to bring about a resolution to the Syrian conflict. The Syrian regime has both showed no commitment to those initiatives and committed horrific violations against the Syrian people, some of which qualify as crimes against humanity, ever since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011. We have released [a detailed report](#) condemning the role played by Algeria in supporting the Syrian regime, walking in the footsteps of other Iran-friendly regimes such as Iraq and Lebanon. We noted in the report that Algeria has always opposed the rights of the Syrian people and sided with the Syrian regime. As such, Algeria has been involved in and supported the violations committed against the Syrian people. The report called on Algeria to respect the rights of the victims killed, maimed and dispossessed by the regime, and to stop promoting it, and, instead, apologize to its victims for voting against them nine times at the Human Rights Council.

On March 18, the Syrian regime's President, Bashar Assad, and an accompanying delegation went to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on an official visit, the first of its kind since the suspension of Syria's membership in the Arab League in November 2011. There, [he was received](#) by Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the UAE, as well as meeting with Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, [the ruler of the Emirate of Dubai](#). SNHR notes that reviving relations with a brutal regime that committed crimes against humanity against its people first and foremost harms the image of the UAE, and second, is viewed as a support for the myriad violations committed by the Syrian regime against the Syrian people in the eyes of international law, since combating horrific violations that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes is one of the fundamental responsibilities of all world states, especially considering their ratification of the Geneva Conventions.

On September 13, [Filippo Grande, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#), met with the Syrian regime's Minister of Interior Mohamad al-Rahmoun at the conference hall of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in Damascus city's Kafrsousa neighborhood. It seems that the Commissioner and his team are not sufficiently aware of the background and history of Mohammad al-Rahmoun and the horrific violations in which he has been involved, some of which constitute crimes against humanity, while other qualify as war crimes. On September 22, we released a statement entitled, ['The Syrian Regime's Interior Minister is Involved in Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees'](#) Meeting With Him Harms the Issue of Syrian Refugees', in which we shed light on al-Rahmoun's history citing detailed information held on SNHR's database.

We, at SNHR, believe that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees should have avoided meeting with the Syrian regime's Minister of Interior, considering that the minister, nominally at least, sits as the head of the regime's infamous security apparatus. This meeting sends a negative message to millions of refugees and millions of IDPs in the areas outside the control of the regime, since it expresses implicit support for reconciling with the Syrian regime and reflects a willingness on the UNHCR's part to embrace rapprochement with the Syrian regime despite the [most recent report by the COI](#) confirming that the regime continues to commit widespread violations, confirmation further corroborated by the reports issued by our colleagues at [HRW](#) and [Amnesty International](#), as well as by [SNHR's own reports](#), all of which confirm that Syria is an unsafe country, and that the main reason for this lack of safety is that no political transition has happened from a dictatorship to a democracy.

In the period from October 30-November 10, Alena Douhan, UN Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of the Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, paid a visit to Syria. The visit came after [statements](#) by Douhan that were published on the website of the Human Rights Council. In these, Douhan said, "[I am looking forward to engaging with the government and non-governmental stakeholders in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and impartiality, with the view to gather first-hand information on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the full realization of all human rights in the country.](#)"

A Belarusian national, Alena Douhan is a professor of International Law at the Belarusian State University. Douhan assumed her duties as the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights on March 25, 2020.

Besides gathering first-hand information on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the full realization of all human rights in the country, Douhan intended to pay specific attention during her visit to issues including "secondary sanctions, sanctions over-compliance and the sanctions-induced obstacles to the realisation of the sustainable development goals and the right to development," according to the same press release.

When dealing with the Syrian regime, one cannot dismiss the fundamental fact that the overwhelming majority of Syrian regime officials are implicated in committing violations against the Syrian people. The same applies to the members of the People's Assembly, who have been appointed by the regime's security services, [with one-third of these individuals](#) being directly involved in committing or supporting violations against the Syrian people. None of these officials represent the interests of the Syrian people in any way. On November 8, two days before the UN rapporteur's visit ended, we released a brief report entitled, '[UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan Should Demand that the Syrian Regime Ends Violations and Crimes Against Humanity as a Precondition for Lifting Sanctions](#)', in which we expressed doubts about this visit and its goals, based on our assessment [of a press release published by Ms. Douhan on December 28, 2020](#). The statement addressed the latest US sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime,

describing them as “unilateral coercive measures,” while dismissing or not even mentioning the reasons that had prompted some states to impose sanctions on the Syrian regime. She also failed to mention that the sanctions imposed by European states, the US, Canada, Turkey, and Australia explicitly exclude relief and medical supplies. It should also be noted that this was the first statement released by Douhan on Syria, despite the numerous “unilateral coercive” measures taken against the Syrian people, which were far more threatening to human rights than sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime, with some notable examples being:

- Iran deploying tens of thousands of its militants from around the world to Syria. Those militias have been involved in human rights violations that qualify as war crimes.
- Russia deploying mercenary companies such as Wagner, which have been involved in direct killings and widespread looting.
- Thousands of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah group’s fighters crossing into Syria and occupying and looting dozens of neighborhoods and areas, over sectarian considerations.

On the last day of her visit, November 10, [Douhan submitted a 20-page report](#) including information to which she referred using terms such as “comprehensiveness, independence, impartiality and verification about issues pertaining to the negative impact of unilateral sanctions.” She noted, however, that this information was preliminary with a final report set to be submitted in September 2023.

We, at SNHR, believe that a statement including detailed information about multiple sectors in the context of examining each sector before and after imposing sanctions should naturally take months of meticulous and detailed research to compile. In this case, however, Douhan released her statement on the final day of her 10-day visit. It is our belief that this short period of time alone is grounds for discrediting the accuracy and truthfulness of the information presented, even if it was preliminary.

It may be true that sanctions have side-effects that impact civilians.⁵⁵ It is not possible to punish a murderous dictatorship like the Syrian regime and its security divisions that have permeated every aspect of the Syrian people’s lives without it affecting Syrian society. However, there are other aspects of the economic suffering of the Syrian people that are far more serious than the sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime, such as: displacing 14 million Syrian citizens, both internally and in refuge countries, Arresting/disappearing around 136,000 Syrian citizens at the hands of the Syrian regime, and the systemic corruption which led the Syrian regime [to be ranked the second-worst regime on the Corruption Perception Index for the year 2021](#).

55. Abdul Ghany, F. (2022). Hal yajibu an yūjadu Maqāyīs mukhtalifah li-kayfiyat farḍ al-Umam al-Muttaḥidah al-‘uqūbāt Inna kāna al-Maqṣūd farḍ al-iltizām bi-ḥuqūq al-insān aw al-Muḥāfazah ‘alā al-amn wa-al-salām?, [Should there be different standards on how UN sanctions are imposed depending on whether the sanctions are intended to enforce human rights or to maintain peace and security?]. Qalamoun, 21, 271–280.

Moreover, sanctions alone are not enough to put pressure on the Syrian regime. If they had been, it would not have been possible for the regime to survive and to continue committing war crimes and crimes against humanity for 11 years. Other forms of sanctions must be enacted along with the economic ones, including military sanctions. This should also be carried out in tandem with the expression of serious political willpower through serious action within a strict, timed plan with the objective of bringing about political transition towards a government that respects democracy and human rights.

We believe that Alena Douhan should have called on the Syrian regime to end all violations, including torture and enforced disappearance, return properties and lands to their rightful owners, and compensate all victims. This is the only way to lift the sanctions. Meanwhile, the Human Rights Council should thoroughly familiarize itself with the details of the work of the UN Special Rapporteurs and with their political and ideological views. The Human Rights Council should also assess the sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime in a professional and objective way, and call on the Security Council to take action and impose UN sanctions on the Syrian regime that includes an arms embargo. Otherwise, the Syrian regime's impunity is perpetuated in a way that will encourage more totalitarian and oppressive regime to follow in the Syrian regime's footsteps.

On October 19, [a delegation from the Palestinian 'Islamic Resistance Movement' \(Hamas \) presided over by Khalil al-Hayya, a Hamas politburo member and senior official, visited Syria to revive its relations with the Syrian regime](#), with the delegation meeting with regime head Bashar al-Assad. Restoring any form of relationship with the Syrian regime is an expressing of support for the regime, and sends a message of forgiveness for the violations committed by it, effectively encouraging it to commit more. As such, it is a form of involvement and contribution to those violation. We released [a statement](#) stressing that Hamas should, at the very least, demand that the Syrian regime releases the Palestinian detainees it's imprisoning, who are estimated to number a least 2,721 in total as documented by SNHR's database, ends their torture, and compensates the victims.

On December 19, [SANA](#) reported that the Syrian regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Faisal Mekdad had held a meeting with Adele Khodr, Regional director of UNICEF's office in the Middle East and North Africa. During the meeting, SANA reported, Mekdad had expressed "his gratitude for the efforts made by the organization in collaboration with Syrian national agencies and relevant ministries to support children in Syria, as he underlined the importance of increasing the work on early recovery programs." Through such meetings, the Syrian regime is trying to exploit the early recovery and reconstruction issue to promote itself and use the funds allocated for such projects to support its nosediving economy. The Syrian regime is also trying to use the aid provided by international organizations and distribute it as it suits the regime's needs to do. We, at SNHR, believe that Khodr should not have attended this meeting, which sends a wholly negative message to millions of Syrians who have suffered and continue to suffer the agony of the Syrian regime's numerous violations, since doing so demonstrates an implicit reconciliation between the UN and the Syrian regime and suggests a desire for reproachment, despite the [most recent report by the UN Human Rights Office](#) and the numerous reports by international groups confirming that the Syrian regime is still committing widespread violations.

B. Military developments

On January 5, the US-led Coalition forces announced in [a statement](#) that a base belonging to the SDF, which contains Coalition advisers, had been targeted in a missile attack by Iranian-backed groups who were stationed in the vicinity of al Mayadeen city, east of Deir Ez-Zour city. The statement added that the Syrian Democratic Forces responded to the point of origin of the attack by firing six artillery shells.

On January 22, al-Hrak city in the eastern suburbs of Daraa, was targeted in an artillery attack by Syrian regime forces. [Three civilians, two of them were women, were injured in the attack.](#) It should be noted that most of Daraa's areas agreed to security settlements with the Syrian regime struck in September and October 2021.

From February 3-6, Russian warplanes launched missile strikes on the outskirts of Kafr Shlaya village in the southern suburbs of Idlib, targeting agricultural land and an uninhabited poultry farm. Also in February, we monitored field activity by Russian forces at the points where they are stationed. Furthermore, we recorded Russian warplanes flying over the areas of the eastern suburbs of Aleppo at midnight on February 23. These warplanes fired an air-to-air missile that caused powerful explosions in the sky, in parallel with the firing of photoflash bombs.

We also monitored the deployment of massive military reinforcements by the Russian forces stationed in Syria to participate in the military maneuvers conducted by the Russian forces. In February, [the Russian Ministry of Defense](#) revealed, in a statement published on its official website, that Sergei Shoigu, the Russian Defense Minister, had arrived in Syria, where he met with the Syrian regime's president in Damascus and inspected the military maneuvers taking place in the Mediterranean from the "logistical center of the Russian Navy in Tartus."

On March 28, Russian warplanes carried out an airstrike targeting the vicinity of Ma'aret al-Na'san village in the northern suburbs of Idlib with missiles. The sites targeted were close to the dividing lines between Syrian regime forces and armed opposition factions. On March 30, the Russian Military TV Channel, [Zvezda](#), aired video footage which it said showed training exercises for the Syrian regime's Ferqat al-Nemer (the 'Tiger Squad') of 'Division 25 Special Forces' under the supervision of Russian forces that focused on parachute landings. The video, after the second meeting, clearly show pieces of cloths with the UNHCR's logo used by the soldiers in training. We, at SNHR, have reiterated in several reports that it is vital to prevent the Syrian regime from exploiting the aid presented by international organizations and distributing it to suit the regime.

On April 5, the cities of Hasaka and al Qameshli witnessed clashes between Syrian regime forces and the SDF, after which the latter imposed a siege on all the security centers belonging to Syrian regime forces in both cities; this siege reportedly came about in response to the siege imposed by Syrian regime forces on al Sheikh Maqsoud and al Ashrafiya neighborhoods in Aleppo city.

In April, the infighting among SNA factions escalated in the Afrin region and the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo, with light and medium weapons being used in clashes that took place in residential neighborhoods, especially in Afrin city, Bulbul, Izaz, al Bab, and other areas, intimidating civilians and creating a state of chaos. In addition, we recorded several injuries among civilians due to stray gunfire during this fighting, [with one of the wounded civilians dying in Bulbul town, north of Aleppo governorate on April 21, while another civilian died as a result of clashes between two factions in Afrin city on April 23.](#)

Also in April, Syrian-Russian alliance forces launched dozens of airstrikes on the Syrian Badiya (desert), targeting vehicles and areas where ISIS elements, who've been launching attacks on Syrian regime forces, are in hiding. The military operations resulted in the death of dozens of fighters from both sides.

The first quarter of 2022 saw interrupted clashes between the SNA and the SDF in the SDF-held villages that are administratively part of Nahiyat Ein Eisa in the northern suburbs, involving the use of heavy weapons. Nonetheless, the territorial map has stayed the same. Clashes in the area have continued on and off since 2019. On January 22, an artillery attack by the SNA on Jahbal village, Raqqa suburbs, [killed a child.](#)

On June 18, we monitored the outbreak of clashes between members of the SNA's Failq al-Thaleth (Third Corps) and members of the 32nd Division of the Ahrar al Sham Movement (Freemen of the Levant), which is affiliated with the same Third Corps, in the cities and villages of the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo, in connection with the 32nd Division's defection from the Third Corps. The two sides used machine guns during these clashes, in addition to artillery shelling with mortar shells. The fighting between the two parties was concentrated in al Bab area in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo within the villages of al Wash, Dwair al Hawa, Qa'er Kalbin, Ashdoud, Bar'an, Barouza, Abla, and Uwlan, as well as extending to the cities of Afrin and Jarablos, all of which are civilian areas. The clashes reached areas near the camps in the vicinity of al Bab city in eastern Aleppo, and resulted in casualties among the displaced people living in those camps, in addition to causing panic and fear among the residents of those camps.

On June 29, SNA artillery targeted SDF sites in al-Shahba area in the northern suburbs of Aleppo and the areas of northern Manbej suburbs and Ein al-Arab suburbs which are close to the dividing lines. One of the attacks that involved a guided missile [killed two children from the same family](#) in Arab Hassan village in the suburbs of Manbej city, eastern Aleppo.

In July, we 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 also documented the [death of an infant](#) on July 4 at the hands of a regime sniper, while the child was inside his home in Afes village, east of Idlib.

Throughout July as well, we recorded Russian helicopters flying over the city of Manbej in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo on a daily basis. These operations were in tandem with deploying military troops from Syrian regime forces along the frontlines with the SNA in the areas of Manbej and Ein al-Arab.

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 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](#).

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, gunmen from the kidnap victim's family, the 'al Tawil', cut off the Damascus- Suwayda International Road. The situation 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 full-fledged clashes between the two sides on July 26, which resulted in the killing of 23 fighters 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.

In August, the frequency of clashes between clans in SDF-controlled areas increased compared to previous months, as the villages of al Sh-heil and al Sh'aitat in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour and Jdaidet Kahit in the western suburbs of Raqqa witnessed almost daily clashes that involved the use of light and medium weapons between several clans fueled by vendettas and grievances. The clashes resulted in the killing of at least 13 people, while dozens of houses were burnt. The eastern region continues to witness insecurity due to the availability of weapons in the hands of the clans and the failure of the controlling party, namely the SDF, to take deterrent measures to limit the spread of weapons and end the clashes between these clans that are taking place on a daily basis.

Additionally, Tal Tamar city and the surrounding villages in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka, which are under the control of the SDF, were subjected to intense artillery and mortar shelling in July and August by the SNA forces stationed in Ras al Ein area in the western suburbs of Hasaka. The bombardment resulted in no casualties among civilians nor any changes in areas of control.

On September 8, we also documented [an attack](#) by Russian ground forces using a medium-range rocket which hit agricultural land in Tal Sahan area in Sahl al Rouj west of Idlib. This attack was carried out at the same time as air strikes, also by Russian forces, on a hilly area near the village of Al-Ghafar near Tal Sahan. Investigations by SNHR are still continuing to ascertain if the rocket was loaded with cluster munitions.



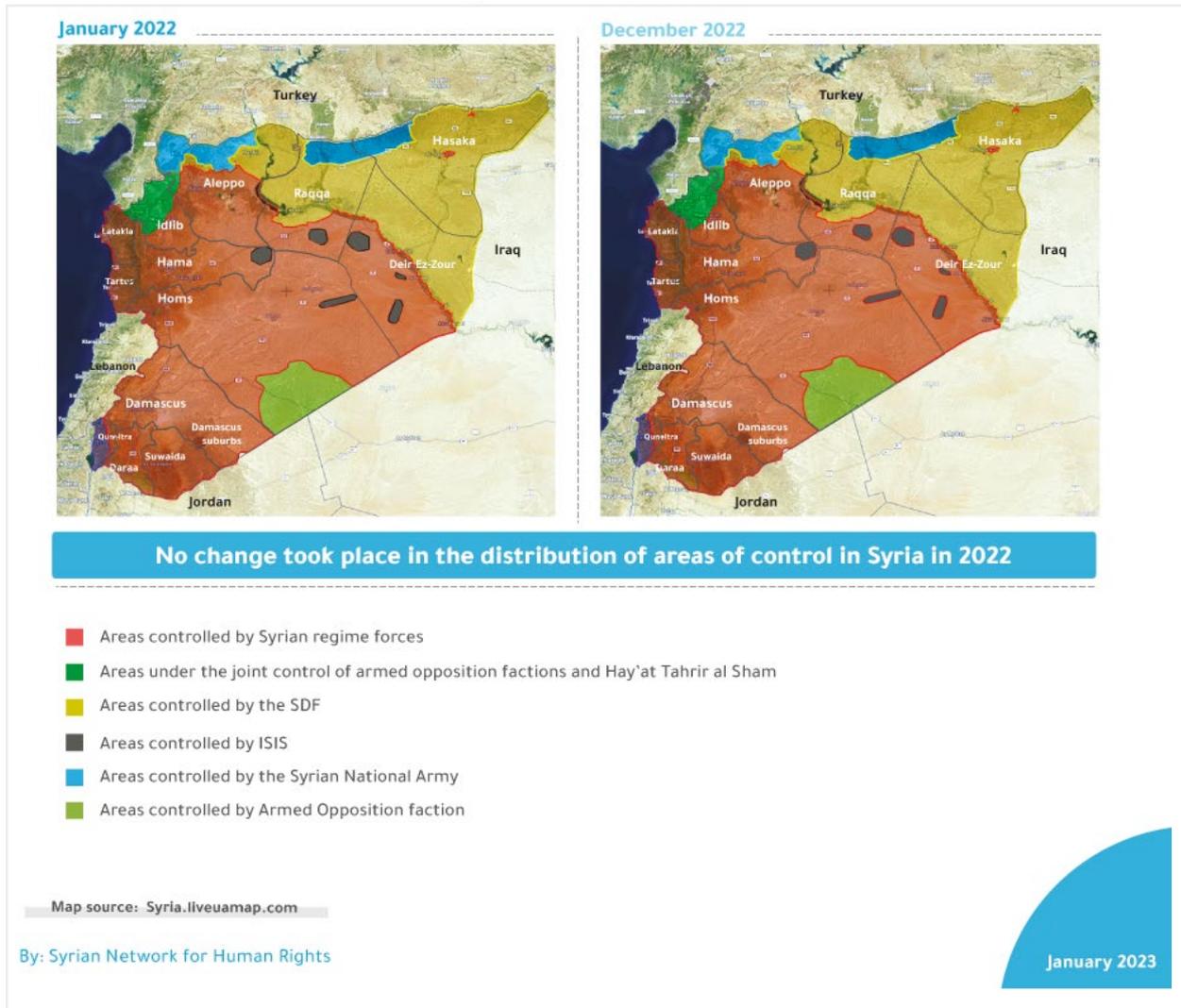
Remnants of a medium-range missile fired by forces believed to be Russian on agricultural land near Tel Sahan in the Ruj plain, west of Idlib, 8 September 2022

On September 27, a Russian airstrike that targeted an armed opposition headquarters located in the middle of [multiple IDPs camp](#) in northern Idlib injured four civilians who were close to the targeted site. The bombardment also, naturally, created a state of panic and fear among the camp's residents.

On November 20, the [Turkish Ministry of Defense](#) unveiled 'Operation Claw-Sword'. As part of the operation, Turkish forces carried out aerial and ground-based attacks targeting SDF-held areas in Hasaka governorate and al-Shahba area in the northern suburbs of Aleppo, as well as the areas of Manbej and Ein al-Arab in eastern Aleppo suburbs.

On December 29, the [SDF's official website announced the launch of a new security operation codenamed, 'Al Jazira Thunderbolt'](#), which involves the group's internal security forces in northern and eastern Syria coordinating with international coalition forces, to eliminate ISIS cells responsible for carrying out attacks against al-Hawl Camp, Hasaka, and southern Qameshli in recent months. Dozens of ISIS affiliates have been arrested in connection with the operation, with these forces announcing [a state of emergency](#) and imposing a curfew in Raqqa city since December 26, in response to an attack on the same day by unidentified gunmen believed to be ISIS affiliates that targeted an SDF center in Raqqa city, killing six SDF personnel.

None of the attacks outlined above have led to any sustained or clear changes in territorial control of Syrian lands. The map below shows the distribution of territories among the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2022. The map, designed by SNHR's graphic design team, is based on the maps from the website 'liveuamap'.



C. Human rights developments

On January 1, the IOM issued its [eleventh report](#) among a series of global migration reports issued every two years. The latest report. The report estimated the number of Syrian refugees around the world at 6.7 million until the end of 2020, an increase of 100,000 refugees from 2019. Syria also came at 161, out of 163 countries, on the Global Peace Index.

On January 13, Catherine Marchi-Uhel, Head of UN International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on Syria, Paulo Pinheiro, Chair of UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria, Hanny Megally and Lynn Welchman, Commissioners at UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria, said that some states continue to put barriers in the way of universal jurisdiction which prevent the prosecution of Syrian war criminals. [In a joint opinion article](#), on Al Jazeera, they called on the international community and the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

On January 13, HRW released its [32nd annual report](#) on the human rights situation in more than 100 countries and regions around the world in 2021. [In the detailed paragraph on Syria](#), the report said that the Syrian-Russian alliance forces had conducted “indiscriminate aerial bombing of schools, hospitals, and markets—the civilian infrastructure essential to a society’s survival. According to Airwars, a UK-based monitoring group, the Russian air force alone has carried out around 39,000 airstrikes in Syria since 2015.” The report cited several statistics from SNHR.

On January 24, at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, [Syria’s human rights record was examined by the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review Working Group for the third time](#). The countries participating in the review made [many recommendations](#) to the Syrian regime delegation regarding the human rights situation in Syria, the most important of which was that it put an end to enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and torture in Syria. The participating countries also called on the Syrian regime’s delegation to publish official lists of detainees and those who died in detention centers. SNHR had submitted [a report](#) to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as [part of the contribution of “Other Stakeholders”](#) to the documents of this session, on July 14, 2021.

On January 24, the OPCW’s Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), published [a report](#) regarding incidents of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Marea city, north of Aleppo, in two incidents, on September 1 and 3, 2015. The report concluded that [“all the information obtained and analysed by the FFM provides reasonable grounds to believe that sulfur mustard, scheduled chemicals to the Convention, was used as a weapon on September 1, 2015.”](#) The report stated that, according to witnesses, the attack was carried out from sites under the control of ISIS.

On January 27, [HRW and the Syrian Legal Development Programme reported](#) that UN agencies “do not sufficiently incorporate human rights principles in their assessment of UN suppliers and partners in Syria,” and this exposes them to significant reputational and actual risk of financing abusive actors. The two organizations released a report and guide in question-and-answer form about human rights-compliant procurement practices to assist UN agencies in Syria.

On February 1, the OPCW's FFM released a report which concluded that [the Syrian regime was responsible for a chemical weapon attack](#) on Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama on October 1, 2016.

On February 4, Human Rights Watch said in a report entitled, '[Northeast Syria: Fate of Hundreds of Boys Trapped in Siege Unknown](#)' that the recaptured detainees should be protected and their circumstances clarified, adding that the SDF should ensure the humane treatment of all evacuees from Ghwayran prison, including children, of whom the organization said that there were 400 in the jail.

On February 21, [RSF](#) called on the French judicial authorities to complete their war crimes investigation into the Syrian army's shelling of a media center in Homs city on February 22, 2012, in which French photographer Rémi Ochlik was killed, along with US reporter Marie Colvin, and a French reporter was injured. The statement released by the group added that the French authorities have yet to bring any charges regarding this incident.

On March 2, the Office of the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General published [a statement](#) revealing that Syria ranks amongst the most food-insecure countries globally, with over half the population being severely food insecure. A quarter of children under 5 face stunted growth in parts of Syria.

On March 9, the [COI issued its latest report](#) on human rights violations in Syria for the period from July 1 to December 31, 2021, in which it reviewed the grave violations of human rights throughout Syria and focused on the military operations practiced by all parties and the continuation of detentions and enforced disappearances against Syrians. The report discussed the conditions of IDPs, stating that these had reached 7 million in total during this period. On the humanitarian situation in Syria, the report said that Syrians are suffering from extreme poverty, adding that nearly 90 percent of the population now lives below the poverty line.

On the same day, the UN Human Rights Council issued [a press release](#) commenting on the report, saying that "the Commission expressed concern at recent reports of systemic failures in investigations into possible war crimes and other incidents causing civilian harm in Syria in 2018-2019 by the United States-led coalition." Furthermore, the statement urged the United States, and all other parties, to conduct credible, independent and impartial investigations into incidents entailing civilian casualties in which their forces are implicated to ensure those responsible for violations are held accountable and to ensure non-repetition of such incidents, and to make their findings public.

On March 14, UNICEF issued [a report](#) on violations against children in Syria over the past 11 years. The report documented that 6,833 children have been killed between 2011 and 2021.

On March 15, [Oxfam](#)⁵⁶ said that 11 years after the Syrian conflict began, six in ten Syrians do not know where their next meal is coming from. The organization added, "Syrians are more afraid of dying of hunger than of war."

On March 15, [HRW](#) released an audio archive of interviews with Syrian survivors, journalists, lawyers, and activists, focusing in particular on the trial that took place in Koblenz, Germany, in which Anwar R., a former officer in the Syrian regime's intelligence, was convicted of crimes against humanity, where he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

On March 18, Paulo Pinheiro, [Chair of the COI](#), said during the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council that in Syria, "People across the country, regardless of who is in control, live in fear of being arrested for expressing their opinion, belonging to a dissenting political party, reporting for the media or defending human rights," adding that parts of the country are still witnessing frontline fighting and bombardment, while violence against civilians is increasing across the country.

On March 29, Amnesty International released [its annual report](#) on the human rights situation for the year 2021-22 in 154 countries around the world; on Syria, the report said, "Parties to the conflict continued to commit with impunity serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and other gross human rights abuses."

On March 31, the [International Rescue Committee](#) reported that since the beginning of the conflict, the healthcare system in Syria has seen unprecedented levels of violence and violations, with a quarter of all killings of health workers in conflict zones around the world in the past five years recorded in Syria. The committee added that, according to the latest estimates, more than 50 percent of the physicians previously in the area have left the northeastern region of Syria.

On April 1, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted Resolution [A/HRC/49/L.30](#) on the renewal of the mandate of the COI for an additional year. [On April 21](#), we released a report on this resolution.

A/HRC/RES/49/17 - Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic

YES	ARGENTINA	ABST	INDIA	ABST	PAKISTAN		
YES	ARMENIA	ABST	INDONESIA	YES	PARAGUAY		
YES	BRUN	YES	JAPAN	YES	POLAND		
NO	BOLIVIA (PLURINATIONAL STATE OF)	ABST	KAZAKHSTAN	YES	QATAR		
ABST	BRAZIL	ABST	LIBYA	YES	REPUBLIC OF KOREA		
NO	CAMEROON	YES	LTUHANIA	NO	RUSSIAN FEDERATION		
NO	CHINA	YES	LUXEMBOURG	ABST	SENEGAL		
YES	COTE D'IVOIRE	YES	MALAWI	ABST	SOMALIA		
NO	CUBA	ABST	MALAYSIA	ABST	SUDAN		
NO	ERITREA	YES	MARSHALL ISLANDS	YES	UKRAINE		
YES	FINLAND	ABST	MAURITANIA	ABST	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES		
YES	FRANCE	YES	MEXICO	YES	UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND		
YES	GABON	YES	MONTENEGRO	YES	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA		
ABST	GAMBIA	ABST	NAMIBIA	ABST	UZBEKISTAN		
YES	GERMANY	ABST	NEPAL	NO	VENEZUELA (BOLEVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)		
YES	HONDURAS	YES	NETHERLANDS				
		YES	23	ABST	16	NO	7

The vote outcome on the resolution on the human right situation in Syria at the Human Rights Council

56. Oxfam International was formed in 1995 by a group of independent non-governmental organizations. They joined together as a confederation to maximize efficiency and achieve greater impact to reduce global poverty and injustice.

On April 1, Catherine Marchi-Uhel, [Head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism in Syria \(IIIM\)](#), said, while presenting the [IIIM's eighth report](#) at the United Nations General Assembly, that the atrocities perpetrated in Syria are among the most barbaric since the end of World War Two. She added, **"The ripple effect of pervasive impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity can be clearly seen today,"** noting that despite the tireless efforts of many States and individuals regarding the need for accountability, **"the response to the Syrian crisis has been inadequate."**

On April 4, TRIAL International, in collaboration with Civitas Maxima, the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA), the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the REDRESS organization, published the [Universal Jurisdiction Annual Review \(UJAR\) 2022](#). The report reviewed all cases that took place within the framework of universal jurisdiction in 2021, including special cases regarding the commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations in Syria. The report stressed the increasing importance of universal jurisdiction within the framework of international justice, as 2021 witnessed developments in 60 cases through 16 jurisdictions.

On April 7, the UN General Assembly adopted [a resolution](#) suspending Russia's membership of the Human Rights Council, against the backdrop of Russian human rights violations in its war on Ukraine. The resolution was adopted with 93 approving it, 24 opposing and 58 abstentions. The Syrian regime's delegate in the General Assembly voted against the resolution. SNHR welcomed the adoption of the resolution in [a report](#) issued on April 21.

On April 8, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [told](#) the UN General Assembly on the situation of human rights in Syria that "Tens of thousands of Syrians have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty in dire conditions and often subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Men and women, as well as children, including boys as young as 11, have suffered sexual violence while in detention." The High Commissioner added that the scale of this tragedy is daunting, with people going missing in different contexts, such as during hostilities, displacement or in detention.

On May 19, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) issued [its annual report](#) on the situation of internal displacement around the world; on [Syria](#), the report said that around 6.7 million people in Syria were living in internal displacement at the end of 2021, the highest figure worldwide, indicating that around 80 percent of displaced households have been uprooted for four or more years.

On June 9, the World Bank issued a report entitled, ['Lost Generation of Syrians'](#). The report said that the factors of conflict, displacement, and the collapse of economic activities had contributed to the deterioration of the standard of living of families in Syria, adding that the depreciation of the currency in Syria has led to a doubling of prices locally, which in turn led to increasing the rate of inflation, with the inflation rate in 2020 reaching 114 percent. The report indicated that, according to the minimum price index of the World Food Program, food prices had increased by 97 percent during 2021, in addition to an increase of 236 percent in 2020.

On June 17, 2022, the COI issued a paper entitled, [‘Syria’s Missing and Disappeared: Is There a Way Forward?’](#) in which it made recommendations to the UN Secretary-General regarding the establishment of an independent international mechanism to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people in Syria, including persons subjected to enforced disappearance. The paper states, “The evidence shows that the government is aware of and meticulously registers information about those it has detained. However, rather than investigate the crimes committed in its detention facilities, it continues to withhold information from family members...” The paper added that incommunicado detention and disappearances still occur routinely, adding that this is indicative of the absence of political will among the parties to the conflict to address the situation. The paper recommended the establishment of a mechanism with an international mandate, defining its precise terms of reference, working methods, and strategies... according to the mandate granted to it and with the participation of the families of the missing persons in Syria. SNHR has supported all the demands made by the COI on what it views as a necessary UN mechanism with a specific mandate centered around the issue of missing people, including forcibly disappeared persons. We have reiterated in dozens of our reports that the sheer magnitude of enforced disappearance in Syria, with approximately 112,000 people classified as forcibly disappeared, 86 percent of whom are forcibly disappeared at the hands of the Syrian regime, makes such a need a pressing one for all the missing and their families. We have submitted a report to the OHCHR outlining our vision for such a mechanism, stressing that we are willing to cooperate should such a mechanism be created, as well as to provide the information and data that we have documented on our databases for the past 11 years.

On June 29, RSF issued [a statement](#) in which it condemned the increase in restrictions imposed by the Self-Management forces on journalists in northern and eastern Syria. The statement indicated that the aim of these restrictions is to tighten the grip of the Self-Management forces on news coverage in the region.

On July 8, the UN Human Rights Council adopted [Resolution No. A/HRC/50/L.5/REV.1](#) on the human rights situation 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. SNHR welcomed the Council’s decision and hailed all the countries that voted in favor of the rights of the Syrian people. On the other hand, we condemned 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 UN 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 UN has verified the occurrence of 2,271 grave violations against children in Syria, and documented 898 killing and maiming operations against children in Syria.

On August 5, [Refugees International](#) stated in a report that approximately 4.1 million people were at that moment in need of humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria, including 3.1 million people suffering from food insecurity, and 1.7 million people who are displaced and living in camps. The report added that it would be very difficult to find suitable alternatives to the United Nations cross-border aid mechanism for those who need it in northwest Syria if the Russian veto continued to block it. The report asserted that members of the Security Council should reject attempts to replace the cross-border aid mechanism fully in the mechanism of cross-line aid delivery in future decisions.

On August 25, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) released its [13th annual](#) report on monitoring the use of cluster munitions worldwide. The report noted that Syria continues to be the worst country in the world in terms of the death toll from cluster munitions, which has been the case since 2012. The highest national death toll globally in 2021 was in Syria, where 37 victims were killed by cluster munitions, constituting nearly 25 percent of the total number of victims worldwide in 2021. The report indicated that two-thirds of these victims were children. SNHR released [a statement](#) commenting on the report.

On September 14, the COI on Syria issued its 26th report, covering the period between 1 January and 30 June 2022. The report documented grave violations of fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law across Syria. We released [a statement](#) regarding the report.

On October 4, the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW) published [its findings](#) on the Plurinational state of Bolivia, Syria, and Venezuela in the aftermath of Session 35 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. In relation to Syria, the committee expressed concern that migrant workers in Syria face a host of severe difficulties and rights violations due to the armed conflict, as well as the political, economic, and social instability, not to mention the existence of foreign armed forces and non-states armed groups.

On October 7, the UN Human Rights Council adopted [Resolution A/HRC/51/26](#) in its 51st session. The Resolution demands that the "Syrian regime meet its responsibility to protect the Syrian population and to respect and protect the human rights of all persons within its jurisdiction, including persons in detention and their families." The Resolution stresses that the Syrian regime is the party "first and foremost" responsible for "the situation of the tens of thousands of individuals forcibly disappeared and those missing and detained in the Syrian Arab Republic." On October 10, SNHR released [a statement](#) welcoming the Resolution.

On October 24, HRW released a report revealing that [Turkish authorities](#) had arrested, detained, and [deported](#) hundreds of Syrian refugee men and children in an arbitrary manner between February and July 2022, including children unaccompanied by their families. The report stressed that this constitutes a violation of international law. Additionally, HRW said that Turkey's being depicted as a safe third country is inconsistent with its deportation of Syrian refugees to northern Syria on this scale.

On November 30, HRW and Amnesty International released [a joint statement](#) calling for the establishment of an "international, independent entity" concerned with tracing and identifying those who have gone missing or been forcibly disappeared in Syria since the start of the Syrian uprising in 2011. The statement stressed that the Syrian regime's government "has been responsible for the vast majority of those disappearances which frequently result in deaths in custody and extrajudicial executions." The statement added that SNHR estimates that roughly 111,000 people are still disappeared, with most of these believed to be in the hands of Syrian regime forces.

On December 6, [the Aid Worker Security Database \(AWSD\)](#) project released [a report shedding light on the violence taking place in al-Hawl Camp](#) in northeastern Syria, which has noticeably affected the provision of humanitarian services there. Violent attacks targeting aid workers in the camp have increased significantly since 2020, the report reveals, noting that 72 percent of all attacks in camp settings globally so far in 2022 took place in al-Hawl Camp. The information provided by the reports draws upon several local sources accessed thanks to the project's [partnership with SNHR](#), as well as the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) and the MSF.

On December 14, RSF released [its annual round-up report](#) for the year 2022 on violence and abuses against journalists. The report named Syria as one of the world's six most dangerous countries for journalists, accounting for the highest number of journalists being held hostage globally, with 42 of the 65 journalists currently held hostage worldwide being held hostage in Syria.

On December 15, HRW said in [a report](#) that over 42,400 foreigners accused of having ties with ISIS are still abandoned by their home countries in camps and jails in northeastern Syria. The report adds that the Self-Administration forces are holding those foreigners, most of them children, along with 23,200 Syrians, in life-threatening conditions. "[The foreigners are held in northeast Syria with the tacit or explicit consent of their countries of nationality.](#)" the report stressed. Some states, such as the UK and Denmark, have revoked the citizenship of some or many of their nationals, leaving them stateless, which constitutes a violation of their right to nationality. The group adds that those governments that contribute knowingly and significantly to this abusive confinement may be complicit in the foreigners' unlawful detention.

D. Most notable investigative releases on the reality of violations in Syria

On January 21, the [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#) published a brief analysis on cross-border aid in Syria, stating, “The UN aid mechanism is alive for another six months, but the threat of famine, Russian vetoes, and military escalation will persist unless Washington takes appropriate steps before the next round of renewal negotiations.”

On January 12, the [Israeli Alma Research](#) and Education Organization website published an investigation in which it said that “The area of Mount Muhammad ben Ali, located about a few kilometers north of the city of Palmyra in eastern Syria, serves as a fortified compound of the radical Shiite axis led by Iran. The site is equipped with medium-range and long-range surface-to-surface missiles inside fortified shafts.” The investigation added that the radical Shiite axis led by Iran has deployed many forces in the Palmyra area, and that air defense systems “probably made in Iran” were installed to secure the land corridor in general and the surface-to-surface missiles stationed there in particular.

On January 19, the [US-based Foreign Policy magazine](#) published an article in which it said that by restoring relations with the Syrian regime, the international community is ignoring one of the most important rules in geopolitics: “Never negotiate with terrorists.” The article added that the US administration must fully enforce the Caesar Act to protect civilians, and must also impose penalties on violators, imposing strict penalties on any activity that would help the Syrian regime maintain or expand its petroleum products sector or energy sector. The article indicated that if the operations of transporting Egyptian gas to Lebanon through Syrian territory require repairing the infrastructure of these pipelines in Syria or building a new structure, then this is considered a violation of Caesar Act.

On January 20, the [US-based New York Times](#) published a feature article on the airstrike that targeted al Tabaqa Dam in al Tabaqa city in Raqqa suburbs on March 26, 2017. The investigation stated that the site was on the list of areas prohibited from being targeted, but a US Special Operation Unit called ‘Task Force 9’ targeted the dam with a fortification-busting bomb, one of the largest in the US arsenal, designed to destroy thick concrete structures. In response to the newspaper’s questions about the targeting, the US Central Command denied targeting the dam, and contented itself with acknowledging the targeting of watchtowers related to the dam and not the dam itself.

On January 26, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP) issued [an analytical report](#) entitled ‘Hunger Hotspots’ covering the period between February and May 2022. The analysis stated that food insecurity is likely to worsen in 20 countries and regions, including Syria, during the period covered by the analysis, which added that Syria is still on the list of countries of concern in terms of food security.

On February 6, the [New York Times](#) published a feature article in which it said that children in Ghwayran prison in northeastern Syria, which was attacked by ISIS last January, suffer from hunger, thirst, and a lack of healthcare, according to Viktor Nylund, UNICEF Syria Representative, who visited the prison on February 5. [A photo obtained by the newspaper from UNICEF](#) showed two teenagers sitting barefoot on a filthy cement floor in a dark room with high windows from which little light enters. The number of children held in each cell was estimated to be approximately 30. The report added that the place still smelt of smoke from the fires that broke out as a result of the military operation that took place in the prison in January 2022.

On February 8, [Foreign Policy](#) magazine published a feature article in which it said that the United States of America had concluded an agreement with Russia to ease political pressure on the Syrian regime at the United Nations, by reducing Security Council sessions on the Syrian regime's chemical weapons, in exchange for allowing cross-border aid to flow to the northwest Syria and enhanced Security Council sessions on humanitarian relief and political transition. The feature article quoted Gregory Koblentz, an expert on Syria's chemical weapons program, as saying that now is not the time to scale back efforts to hold the Syrian regime accountable for its use of chemical weapons and its continued refusal to allow international inspectors to verify the destruction of the regime's remaining chemical weapons.

On February 10, the [American al Hurra TV](#) website published a joint investigation into the UN's efforts to cover up the killing of two humanitarian workers, both part of a relief convoy between the cities of Aleppo and Homs in 2016, who were killed at the hands of Syrian regime forces. The investigation stated that Stephen O'Brien, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the time, and Jan Egeland, UN Senior Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria at the time, did not announce the content of an internal message to the organization saying that the strikes by Syrian regime forces had caused the deaths of two relief workers in 2016.

On February 14, [the Center for Strategic and International Studies](#)⁵⁷ published a research paper on UN aid in Syria, in which it was revealed that the Syrian regime used international aid as a political tool to pressure the areas outside its control and also to support its supporters. The research added that, according to several high-ranking UN officials, for the first time in Syria, the United Nations had allowed "government-affiliated" agencies to provide UN aid individually, as most of the work of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations is carried out by the Syrian Red Crescent and the Syrian Trust for Development affiliated with Asma al Assad, the wife of the Syrian regime's president. In addition, most of the managers in non-governmental and charitable organizations in areas under the Syrian regime's control are close to the regime, making it difficult to monitor the activities of these organizations.

57. A think tank based in Washington D.C.. It was founded in Georgetown University in 1962.

On March 23, [the Guardian](#) published an investigation into the Syrian government's massive program of demolitions, carried out under the pretext of removing mines, in al Qaboun neighborhood in Damascus. The newspaper said that the almost complete demolition of the neighborhood would not leave anything for the refugees to find upon their return. The newspaper added that al Qaboun neighborhood is paying the price for resisting the Syrian regime, and for remaining outside its control until 2017.

On April 4, [the Carter Research Center](#) said that according to a report issued by the center, which highlights the need to clear Syria of unexploded ordnance and weapons remnants, noting that there are still at least 300,000 live but unexploded explosive munitions across Syria which failed to detonate after being deployed between December 2012 and May 2021. The report further noted that the actual number of such munitions could be far higher, adding that the presence of unexploded ordnance is a critical impediment to Syria's recovery and development.

On April 5, [the Action on Armed Violence Organization \(AOAV\)](#)⁵⁸ published its eleventh annual report on harm from explosive weapons looking at the global impact of explosives-related violence in 2021. The report stated that despite the decrease in the frequency of attacks in 2021 compared to the preceding year, Syria still ranks second among the nations worst affected by this problem worldwide, in terms of civilian casualties, as a result of the use of explosive weapons in general, and also as a result of airstrikes.

On May 17, [the Global Protection Group](#) issued a report on explosive ordnance (EO) in Syria, which concluded that one in two people in Syria is at risk of death and injury from this ordnance which also impedes the delivery of crucial humanitarian assistance. The report added that between 100,000 and 300,000 articles of EO have failed to detonate in Syria, and therefore continue to pose an active threat of explosion, in addition to warning of the widespread use of IEDs and landmines. The report also added that according to a 2022 survey of 14 international humanitarian NGOs operating in Syria, six have had to move, postpone or cancel programmes in the past two years because the programme location was contaminated with EO.

On August 8, the US-based Washington [Post published](#) a report shedding light on the Syria regime's serious efforts over the past years to recruit YouTube and social media influencers. Those figure, the report explains, enter Syria through regime-approved travel agencies, and are assigned translators as soon as they land in Syria. The Post reported that even though most of those influencers claim to be politically neutral, they are in fact promoting the Syrian regime's agenda by publicizing false information indicating that the situation in Syria is okay. The report expressed concern over Western companies sponsoring those videos, including Duolingo, SurfShark, and SkillShare, all of which sponsored videos produced during those trips, while influencers made money from this content on YouTube.

58. A non-profit organization that conducts research on the impact of armed violence globally. The organization aims to limit the impact of armed violence through monitoring and researching the reasons and consequences of arms-based violence, with a particular focus on the impact of explosive weapons with wide impact in populated areas.

On November 22, the Netherland-based [PAX for Peace](#)⁵⁹ group released a report in which it stressed that Syria has become a “Laboratory of Drone Warfare”. The report revealed that at least six different states have used Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, in Syria, while other Syrian and non-Syrian armed groups, including Hezbollah and the Iran-supported Iraqi militias, are all operating drones. A total of 39 types of drones have been seen in use in Syria, the report added.

On October 20, AP published [an investigative report](#) focusing on Akjemal Magtymova, the WHO representative in Syria. The report revealed that Magtymova had mismanaged millions of dollars of donor funds, and given gifts to Syrian regime officials, including gold coins and cars. The report further revealed that AP had obtained over 100 confidential documents messages and other materials proving that Magtymova was involved in abusive behavior that included pressuring WHO employees to sign contracts with senior Syrian regime officials. In addition, the report noted that Magtymova sat in on secret meetings with the Russian military, which potentially breaches the WHO's impartiality as a UN organization.

On December 5, the [Lighthouse Reports Website](#) published an investigative report in collaboration with a number of European media outlets which revealed that Bulgarian Border Guard used live bullets to fire on a group of asylum seekers who tried to cross into Bulgaria via the border crossing with Turkey. Video footage published by the website show a Syrian asylum seeker injured when he was shot. The website noted that this is the first visual evidence of the use of live ammunition against asylum seekers trying to reach Bulgaria, adding that this raises serious questions regarding the EU's policy regarding border control.

On December 12, the [International Rescue Committee](#) released its '2023 Emergency Watchlist' report, an annual report that assesses which countries are at the greatest risk of facing new humanitarian crises each year. The report placed Syria among the top 10 most at-risk countries.

59. PAX is the Netherlands' largest peace organization. According to the organization's website, it “works to protect civilians against acts of war, to end armed violence and to build inclusive peace.”

VII. Accountability in Syria: Slow Progress

Almost 12 years have now passed since the start of the popular uprising for freedom in Syria, during which the Syrian people have suffered constant serious violations of human rights that amount to war crimes. Despite this, however, the steps taken on the path to ensure accountability have been subpar at best. Certainly, what has been achieved has failed to deter and hold the perpetrators of violations accountable. The only path that remains to ensure criminal accountability is that of universal jurisdiction after the failure of referring the case to Syria to the ICC, thanks to the Russian-Chinese support of the Syrian regime, and the Security Council's failure to establish a special tribunal for Syria. While 2022 did see some steps taken in terms of complaints and cases brought against perpetrators of violations in Syria, the progress made to date falls very far short of the Syrian people's hopes and aspirations. It is in this spirit that we sincerely hope that 2023 will see greater progress than previous years. Since 2013, SNHR has maintained that it fully supports universal jurisdiction as the way to properly address the situation in Syria. Above all, SNHR will always believe that there can be **"No Justice Without Accountability"**.

Below are the most notable developments we monitored in regard to the course of accountability in 2022

On January 13, the [Higher Regional Court](#) in Koblenz, Germany, convicted Anwar R., who from January 2011 to September 2012, headed the Investigation Department in Security Branch 251 (Al Khatib Branch). The crimes of which Anwar R. was convicted are torture, 27 murders and a case of sexual assault, in addition to detaining 4,000 people and depriving them of their freedom. He received a life sentence. On January 17, [the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz issued a press release](#) in Arabic about its ruling against Anwar R. The statement detailed the charges on which the court based its decision, as well as detailing the trial proceedings, witnesses and the mechanism for verifying the charges.

On January 19, the first session in the trial of Syrian doctor, Alaa M., [began](#) before the Higher Regional Court in Frankfurt, Germany, on charges that fall mostly under the category of crimes against humanity. [The indictment against him, according to the Federal Public Prosecutor](#), included 18 cases of torture of prisoners from the opposition against the Syrian regime in the period from April 1, 2011, until the end of 2012, in military hospitals in Syria, in addition to a charge of premeditated murder of one of the detainees, as well as other charges.

On January 29, the [US Department of Justice](#) announced the arrest of an American woman, on charges of organizing and leading a women's military battalion for ISIS in Syria, in addition to planning an attack on an American university. According to the statement, the accused provided training to members of the women's battalion in late 2016 in Raqqa city in Syria when she became the battalion's leader and organizer, and this included physical training and training in the use of several weapons.

On February 9, the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice published [a joint statement](#) saying that the French Government has presented a bill to authorize the approval of the international judicial cooperation agreement between the French Government and the United Nations Organization, represented by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria. The statement added that the French National Assembly has passed by the bill. The statement indicated that there are more than 40 proceedings under way in French courts to prosecute the most serious crimes committed in Syria.

On February 17, [Le Parisien newspaper](#) reported that the Paris Public Prosecutor's Office had opened a preliminary examination into accusations of complicity in war crimes against the SOS Chrétiens d'Orient association, following the publication of an investigation conducted by the investigative website Mediapart, which revealed that the association had established partnerships with a number of militias affiliated with the Syrian regime which are accused of committing war crimes in Syria. The newspaper added that some of the organization's partners are heads of militias loyal to the Syrian regime that have bombed civilians, looted villages, recruited children and trained them to fight.

On February 21, [the Council of the European Union](#) issued a statement announcing the inclusion of five individuals from the family of Muhammad Makhoul, the uncle of Syrian regime president Bashar al Assad, on the European sanctions list. The statement indicated that Muhammad Makhoul was on the sanctions list from August 1, 2011, until he passed away on September 12, 2020, and all his heirs have also been included on the sanctions list because his inherited assets will support the activities of the Syrian regime, which contributes to the repression of civilians. The list of names provided included his two wives and three of his daughters.

On April 6, the Investigating Judge of the German Federal Court of Justice issued an arrest warrant for a Syrian refugee named as Raed J. in Berlin on charges of belonging to ISIS, in addition to the charge of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The court [statement](#) said that the accused joined ISIS in Syria in the summer of 2014, and added that the accused participated in the organization's attack on the Sh'aitat tribe in Deir Ez-Zour governorate. As a result, at least 700 of the tribe's menfolk were killed. Additional charges have also been brought against Raed related to torture of prisoners in an ISIS prison.

On April 14, the [Office of the Prosecutor at the German Federal Court of Justice](#) indicted a man named Muwaffaq D. related to the commission of war crimes in Syria, with a statement published by the office explaining that the suspect "had fired a grenade, possibly a rocket launcher, an RPG-type missile" on March 23, 2014, at a gathering of civilians in al Reija Square in al Yarmouk neighborhood in Damascus city while they were waiting to receive food aid from UNRWA, killing 7 people and injuring three others, including a child. The statement added that at the time of the crime, the accused was a member of the pro-Syrian regime Free Palestine Movement.

On May 9, the US Department of the Treasury designated a “network of five Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) financial facilitators operating across Indonesia, Syria, and Turkey”. The Department’s [press release](#) added that these individuals “have played a key role in facilitating the travel of extremists to Syria and other areas where ISIS operates.” The press release added that this network has also conducted financial transfers to support ISIS’ efforts in Syria-based displaced persons camps by collecting funds in Indonesia and Turkey, some of which were used to pay for smuggling children out of the camps and delivering them to ISIS foreign fighters as potential recruits.

On May 9, the White House published [a statement](#) saying that US President Joe Biden had extended the sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime for an additional year. The statement added that the United States of America calls on the Assad regime, and its backers, to stop its violent war against the Syrian people, enact a nationwide ceasefire, facilitate the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to all Syrians in need, and negotiate a political settlement in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254.

On May 18, the [France 24](#) TV website reported that a French appeals court had confirmed the indictment against the French cement giant Lafarge on charges of complicity in crimes against humanity in Syria, through activities suspected to have been carried out by the company in order to maintain the operation of its cement factory in Syria in 2013 and 2014. The website quoted the prosecution’s statement which said that the company “financed, via its subsidiaries, Islamic State operations with several millions of euros in full awareness of its activities.” The website indicated that the case against the company was launched by former Lafarge Cement Syria employees backed by NGOs in 2017.

On May 30, the European Council of the EU website published [a press release](#) in which it announced that it would be adding one group and two individuals to the list of those subject to restrictive measures against ISIS and al Qaeda and persons, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them. The statement said that the measures target Hurras al Din, “a Syria-based al-Qaeda affiliated group.” Faruq al Suri, the group’s leader, and Sami al Aridi, its religious leader, were also included on the sanctions list.

On May 31, the Council of the European Union issued [a statement](#) announcing the extension of sanctions and restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for an additional year, until 1 June 2023, in light of its continued repression of the civilian population. According to the statement, the Council removed three persons from the list, which includes 289 persons targeted by both an assets freeze and a travel ban, and 70 entities subject to an assets freeze.

On June 7, the [AP](#) said that the US Prosecution had convicted an American woman for heading a battalion of ISIS fighters in Syria. The agency added that more than 100 women and girls had received training from the guilty woman, as she had been in Syria since late 2012 or early 2013, while her husband at that time assumed a leadership position in ISIS responsible for training snipers.

On June 21, the [European Court of Human Rights](#) ruled, according to [a press statement](#) issued by the court, that Turkey had illegally returned a Syrian refugee to Syria, after forcing him to sign a voluntary return document. The statement added that the refugee, Muhammad Fawzi al Akkad, was arrested by the Turkish authorities while trying to cross into Greece in 2018, after which he was deported to Syria two days after his arrest. The court also ruled that Turkey must pay the plaintiff 9,750 euros in compensation for non-material damages and 2,500 euros in terms of costs and expenses.

On June 29, the British government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office added four Russian officers, two of whom were leaders in the Russian Wagner militia, and three Russian entities to the British sanctions list for Syria. According to the [office's statement](#), the individuals added to the sanctions list had participated in supporting the Syrian regime. In addition, two of those added to the list are leaders of the Russian Wagner militia, while the entities added to the list work in the oil and gas industry in Syria, which is considered to be providing support for the Syrian regime.

On July 7, the [European Court of Human Rights](#) ruled that Greece had to pay a total of €330,000 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 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 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 21, the [EU issued a decision](#) to include four 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 is also active in the automotive, steel, aviation, freight forwarding, construction, and real estate sectors, and Ahmad Khalil and Nasser Deeb, co-owners of Sanad Protection and Security Services,⁶⁰ 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.

60. A private Syrian security company founded in 2017, and supervised by Wagner Group in Syria. The company focuses on protecting Russian interests (phosphate, gas, securing oil sites) in Syria, where natural resources that generate income for the Syrian regime can be found. The company also recruits Syrian mercenaries to fight 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 nine Syrian individuals, including officers of the Syrian regime's military 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.

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.

On October 19, [Reuters](#) reported that the French cement company Lafarge had pleaded guilty in Brooklyn Federal Court in the USA to a charge that it made payments to groups designated as terrorist by the US, including ISIS, in order to maintain its operations in Syria.

On October 24, US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, issued [a press release](#), in which it was revealed that three Syrian regime officers had been sanctioned for their involvement in the regime's chemical weapons attacks on Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs, in August 2013. The attacks resulted in the death of at least 1,400 victims, mostly children.

On November 14, the Council of the European Union published [a statement](#), in which it revealed that it had added MHD Nazier Houranieh & Sons (MHD), as well as the company's co-owners, Shadi & Mohammad Nathir Houranieh, who hold Canadian passports, to the European sanctions listings related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The statement noted that this entity supplies the regime's Syrian Studies and Research Center (SSRC) with materials used to produce chemical weapons delivery systems.

SNHR's role in supporting the path of accountability in 2022

In documenting human rights violations, SNHR's purpose is to preserve the rights of all victims, hold the criminals accountable in pursuit of justice, and support the path of transitional justice, as well as to honor and commemorate the victims, and to contribute to advocacy efforts on a political and social level. Indeed, SNHR redoubled its efforts on the issue of striving for accountability in 2022. Some of the most notable achievements attained by SNHR this year includes:

- SNHR joined the [Chemical Weapon Convention Coalition \(CWCC\)](#)
- SNHR signed [a memorandum of understanding with Harvard University](#) that enables PhD candidates to obtain detailed and daily data providing an accurate account of the developments of the armed conflict in Syria
- [SNHR signed a memorandum of understanding with Amnesty International](#)

Our data was a primary source for many international human rights reports, most notably:

- [The International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition's \(ICBL-CMC\) 13th Annual Report](#) on monitoring the use of cluster munitions worldwide. The report was released in September 2022.

Furthermore, SNHR was cited as one of the main sources for information in several reports by foreign ministries and situation reports by different governments. For example:

- [The US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's annual country report on human rights practices](#) for 2021. The report was released in April 2022.
- [The Immigration Service of the Danish government's Ministry of Immigration and Integration's report](#) on the treatment of refugees returning to Syria. The report was released in May 2022.
- [The US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's annual report for 2021 on International Religious Freedom in Syria](#). The report, released in June 2022, stressed that sectarian violence has continued to escalate due to tensions among religious groups which are exacerbated by government actions, noting that the Alawi minority continues to hold an elevated political status disproportionate to its numbers, particularly in leadership positions in the military and security services.
- [The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs' report on the situation in Syria](#). The report was released in June 2022.
- [The Federal Republic of Germany's Federal Foreign Office's \(AA\) annual report on the security situation in Syria for the year 2021](#).
- [A report by the Denmark's Immigration Service, a directorate within the country's Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration](#) on the recruitment practices implemented by HTS and armed opposition factions in Syria. The report was released in December 2022.

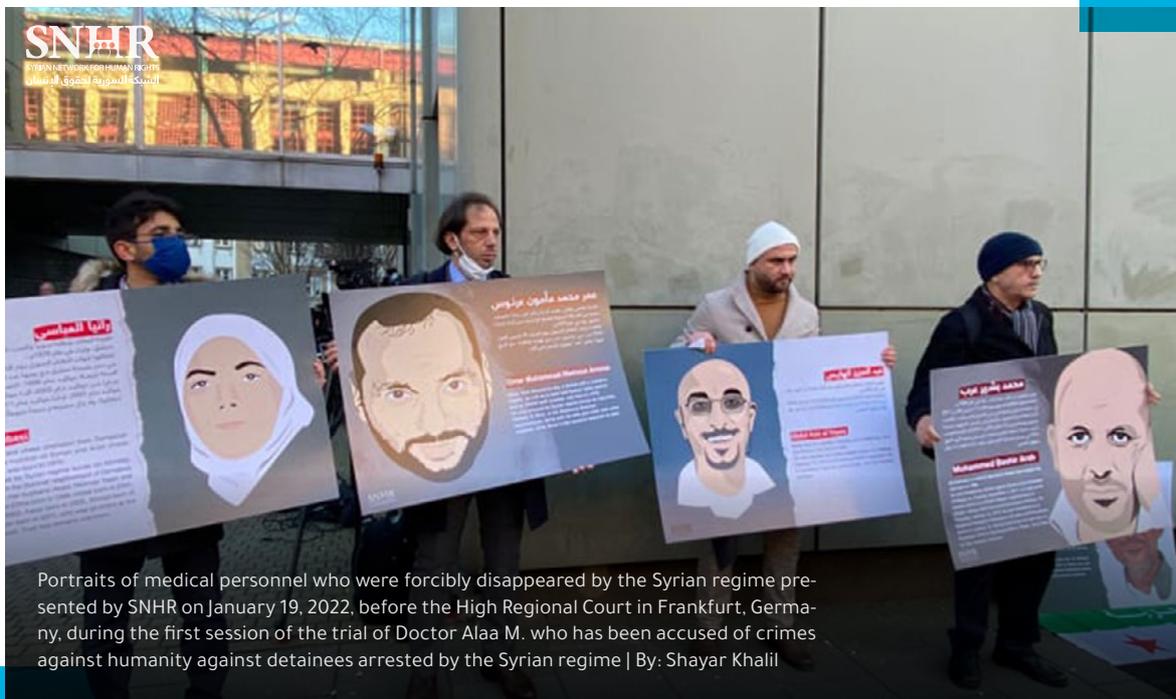
As part of our contribution to the case against [Anwar Raslan](#), SNHR shared a file containing data on 58 Syrian citizens who died due to torture in al Khatib branch during the period of the accused Anwar R.'s service with the Investigation Department. The file was handed over to the German Public Prosecutor through our partner, the ECCHR, which, along with its partner lawyers, supported 14 plaintiffs against Anwar R. [On January 13, the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, convicted Anwar R.](#), who from January 2011 to September 2012, headed the Investigation Department in Security Branch 251 (Al Khatib Branch). The crimes of which Anwar R. was convicted are torture, 27 murders and a case of sexual assault. He received a life sentence. The indictment filed by the prosecution claimed that Anwar R. supervised the torture of nearly 4,000 individuals during interrogation, as well as supervising arbitrary detention and sexual violence, and being involved in the killing of 58 individuals due to torture.

On January 19, [SNHR, represented by its director, Fadel Abdul Ghany, attended](#) the first opening session of the trial of Syrian doctor, Alaa M., which began before the Higher Regional Court in Frankfurt, Germany, on charges that mostly fall under the category of crimes against humanity. The indictment against him included 18 charges of killing, torture, and inflicting physical and mental harm upon prisoners from the opposition against the Syrian regime in 2011-2012, in military hospitals in Homs and Damascus, as well as in Military Intelligence directorate's Prison 261 in Homs.



The German Public Prosecutor at a press conference held following the first session of the trial of Doctor Alaa M. who is accused of crimes against humanity before the High Regional Court in Frankfurt, Germany - January 19, 2022 | By: Saad Yaghi

SNHR aimed to provide support for the trial that we believe will help to expose more details of the torture practices perpetrated in government military hospitals. Furthermore, we presented paintings drawn by SNHR team members showing seven male and female doctors forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime, in order to compare these innocent people with a doctor accused of torturing opposition demonstrators who demanded a change in the dictatorial regime, showing the stark contrast between Doctor Alaa, who tortured those innocent protesters, and the doctors who treated their injuries, provided relief services, and expressed an opinion in support of the need to move towards democracy, and were forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime in retaliation for doing so. Among these brave medics was our colleague, Dr. Omar Arnous, who has been forcibly disappeared since October 2012.



SNHR also shared a file containing documents and data on Syrian victims who died due to torture at military hospitals in Homs and Damascus, as well as at the Military Intelligence Directorate's Prison 261 in Homs in the period during which Doctor Alaa was serving at those facilities in 2011 and 2012. The file was submitted to the German general persecutor through our partner the ECCHR.

In 2022, SNHR continued to share the victim data we documented with the OHCHR as we've done over the past decade. In [its report released on June 28](#), the OHCHR noted that it drew upon eight sources in the preparation of its report, one of which was the SNHR.

Furthermore, [SNHR submitted a report](#) to the UN's CMW in parallel with the Syrian regime's report. SNHR's report demonstrated great commitment to the agreement and the related human rights. In it, we refuted many of the claims made in the regime's report and the previous periodic report. Moreover, we proved that the Syrian regime has violated many of the articles of the agreement, as well as many of the human rights related to it. SNHR was the only group to submit a report to the committee that opposes the report by the Syrian regime, in order to prevent the Syrian regime from controlling the narrative in this human rights space.

On September 19, the Committee reviewed the second and third periodic reports submitted by the Syrian regime for the Syrian Arab Republic in its 35th session (CMW/C/SYR/2-3). [SNHR, through its Executive Director Fadel Abdul Ghany, presented](#) a statement outlining the key points from the report submitted by the SNHR.

Moreover, SNHR submitted a report containing information on the issue of forcibly disappeared persons in Syria to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances as part of the ongoing year-long collaboration with the UN team and in tandem with its 128th session held on September 19-28.

In 2022, SNHR briefed the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, on 25 cases of enforced disappearance.

Also in 2022, SNHR took part in international and UN events, as well as organizing side-events on the sidelines of international events. Furthermore, Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, took part in many seminars and held many lectures and training events for Syrian and Arab human rights activists. All of these efforts are directed in the service of advocacy and mobilization and to contribute to the path of accountability. [The most notable events in which SNHR took part are:](#)

A. High-level and bilateral meetings

On Tuesday, May 10, 2022, Fadel Abdul Ghany [met](#) with a number of ambassadors of the permanent missions to the European Union and spoke about the SNHR's work in documenting human rights violations in Syria for nearly 12 years since the beginning of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011, as well as the SNHR's cooperation with international investigation committees, human rights organizations, and others. Abdul Ghany pointed to the limited successes on the accountability front to date.

On October 14-18, Geneva, Fadel Abdul Ghany held bilateral meetings with:

- International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).
- Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI).
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

On December 5, Fadel Abdul Ghany met with several departments of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in London.

B. Open events

On February 3, SNHR took part in a seminar entitled, '[Legal Implications of the Sentence Issued by the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, against the Syrian officer Anwar R. on the perpetrators of war crimes in the Arab world](#)'. The event was organized by SAM for Rights and Liberties.

On February 15, [SNHR held a launch event for its two latest reports on the most notable violations by HTS and ISIS.](#)

On March 15, SNHR took part in a seminar entitled, '[Strategies and Mechanisms of Human Rights Organizations in the Context of Changing Policies](#)'. The event was organized by the Human Rights Master's Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

On March 17, SNHR held [a high-level international event](#) to mark the 11th anniversary of the start of the Syrian uprising entitled, "Seeking Safety: Forced Displacement in the Syria Conflict".

On March 17, SNHR took part in [an event celebrating the 11th anniversary of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#). Held at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, the event was organized by the Syrian Student Union in the university.

On May 5, SNHR took part in an event on the sidelines of the Brussels VI Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. [The event was organized by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative](#).

On May 6, in collaboration with Crisis Action, SNHR took part in the event, ['No Peace Without Justice: The Need for Accountability in Syria'](#). Held on the sidelines of the Brussels VI Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, the event was sponsored by the EU's Permanent Representatives of Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden.



SNHR'S participation in the "Peace in Syria: Possibility or Fantasy" event on the Sidelines of the Brussels VI Conference - May 2022

On May 6, SNHR took part in an event entitled, ['Peace in Syria: Possibility or Fantasy'](#) on the sidelines of the Brussels VI Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. The event was jointly organized by Baytna and SNHR.

On June 15, SNHR took part in the symposium, ['Indiscriminate Attacks on Civilians as War Tactic in Syria and Ukraine'](#). Held at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, the event was organized by the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies.

In July 20-22, SNHR took part in the meeting of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience's Middle East and North Africa Network.

On September 23, SNHR took part in an event entitled, '[Closing the Gap: The Pursuit of Accountability in Syria](#)'. Held on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, the event was organized by SNHR in collaboration with the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and was sponsored by the US, France, UK, Germany, Canada, and the Netherlands.

On October 3, SNHR took part in an event entitled, '[Reviewing the Facts: Documenting Syria's Expansive Chemical Weapons Use](#)'. The event was Organized by the US Permanent Mission to the OPCW.

On October 16, Fadel Abdul Ghany gave [a lecture at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies](#) touching upon several issues related to the preparation of working methodology and the basic principles of the process of documenting human rights violations. The lecture was attended by students from the Human Rights Master's Program at the institute.

On November 16, SNHR took part in the conference, '[Roadmap to a Safe Environment in Syria](#)'. The conference was co-organized by the Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity, the Free Syrian Lawyers Association, and the European Institute of Peace.

On November 17, [Fadel Abdul Ghany gave a lecture to a group of human rights activists](#) from different Arab countries. Organized by Justice Call, the lecture formed part of the collaborative efforts between the two organizations.

On December 1, SNHR took part in an event entitled, '[Civil Society and the Chemical Weapon Convention](#)'. Held on the sidelines of the 27th OPCW's Conference of the State Parties, the event was sponsored by the Permanent Representations of Canada, the European Union, Germany, Norway, and the United States of America to the OPCW, and took place at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in the Hague.

On December 1, SNHR took part in the first annual meeting of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect

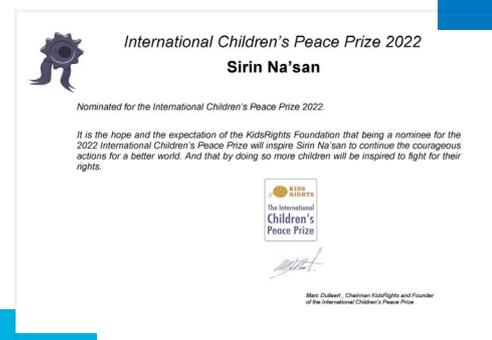
On Friday, December 2, SNHR took part in an event entitled, '[Dialogue With the Civil Society](#)'. Held on the sidelines of the OPCW's 27th Conference of the State Parties (CSP), the event was organized by the Permanent Representatives of Canada, Germany, Norway, the United States of America, and the European Union, together with the French Presidency of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.



Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, in the event, 'Civil Society and the Chemical Weapon Convention' - The Hague

On December 5, SNHR took part in an event entitled, '[The Future of Accountability in Syria](#)'. Held at the King's College London, the event was organized by the Syrian British Consortium.

Also in 2022, SNHR [nominated the Syrian-Kurdish girl Sirin Mathloun Na'san](#) for the International Children's Peace Prize 2022. In October 2022, Sirin's nomination was accepted among those for 170 boys and girls from around the world.



VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions:

- The Syrian regime has failed in its responsibility to protect Syria's population from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from crimes of atrocity, or is itself committing such crimes, as in the case of the Syrian regime, this means that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner.⁶¹
- All parties to the conflict in Syria have violated both international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with the Syrian regime and its allies being the perpetrators of by far the largest number of violations.
- Syrian regime forces have perpetrated various violations that amount to crimes against humanity, ranging from extrajudicial killing to torture, forced displacement and others, with all these crimes being perpetrated in a simultaneously systematic and widespread manner. In addition, Syrian regime forces have committed war crimes through indiscriminate bombardment, and the destruction of buildings and facilities. Not only did the Syrian regime's government breach international humanitarian law and customary law, but it also violated Security Council resolutions - particularly Resolution No. 2042 which is concerned with releasing detainees, and Resolution No. 2139 which is concerned with ceasing indiscriminate attacks and enforced disappearances. All of these issues have yet to be addressed with any form of accountability in light of the legitimacy conferred through Russian-Chinese protection and Western silence.
- The state exercises central control over the detention center. These security branches are not subject to any form of judicial oversight whatsoever, completely contradicting the law on the proceedings of criminal trials. As such, it is highly improbable that any death due to torture could occur without the knowledge of the state's ruling regime. Over the past few years, hundreds of reports on deaths due to torture in regime detention centers have been circulated among Syrians, as well as by Syrian, local, regional, and international media outlets. The Syrian regime itself has informed dozens of families of their loved ones' death in detention centers, even though the regime in most cases claims implausibly that the cause of all these deaths is a 'heart attack', invariably without returning the victims' bodies to their families.

61. United Nations General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

- The Syrian regime is responsible for proving that the deaths that occurred were not due to torture and for returning the dead bodies to their families. However, not even one investigation has been launched in almost 12 years. This fact alone is categorically convicting evidence. Furthermore, torture and deaths due to torture have not been limited to one organ of the Syrian regime. Rather, this requires the involvement of multiple state institutions - most notably the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, security apparatuses, public prosecution, civilian prisons, medical personnel, military hospitals, the judiciary, Ministry of Endowments, and the funeral office. This demonstrates a highly synchronized and coordinated process among those institutions, which is only possible through the management of the highest echelons of power within the Syrian regime which control every aspect of those institutions.
- There are no legal grounds for convicting detainees and leveling charges against them, whether on the basis of the Counterterrorism Law or the Public Penal Code, with rulings usually being based on confessions extracted under torture and coercion. These are not courts in a legal and judicial sense.
- The Syrian regime has held local elections. It is impossible that half of the Syrian population, who became refugees and IDPs, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of wanted fugitives and forcibly disappeared persons at the hands of the security forces, participated in these elections. As such, the right to public participation is nonexistent, constituting a violation of Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁶²
- The Syrian regime issues fabricated figures regarding the Syrian population. The regime also refuses to register the figures for the number of Syrian citizens that have been killed by its bombardment or due to torture in its prisons at the civil registry, as well as failing to publish lists of electoral records. This is how the Syrian regime is able to name any percentage it wanted as voter turnout.
- Customary international law prohibits pillage according to Rule 52⁶³ and Rule 111,⁶⁴ as does international criminal law,⁶⁵ with no legal requirement for identifying the extent or economic cost of the pillage in question. As a crime entailing dangerous consequences for the victims, it qualifies as a serious violation of international law.

62. "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country." United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25.

63. "Pillage is prohibited." International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 52](#) of the customary humanitarian international law.

64. "Each party to the conflict must take all possible measures to protect the wounded, sick and shipwrecked against ill-treatment and against pillage of their personal property." International Committee of the Red Cross, Rule 111 of the customary humanitarian international law <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule111>

65. [Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court](#), Article 8-2-b-xvi and Article 8-2-e-v.

- Additionally, the Syrian regime, with the clear backing of its Russian and Iranian allies, has violated the Geneva Conventions⁶⁶ through the widespread nature of its pillaging, which in many areas has taken the form of destroying properties or claiming ownership in a widespread manner that is not justified by the necessities of warfare and in a way that is unlawful and arbitrary.
- The Syrian regime has violated Principle 21 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement⁶⁷ which states that:
 1. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of property and possessions
 2. The property and possessions of internally displaced persons shall in all circumstances be protected, in particular, against the following acts:
 - A. Pillage;
 - B. Direct or indiscriminate attacks or other acts of violence;
 - C. Being used to shield military operations and objectives;
 - D. Being made the object of reprisal;
 - E. Being destroyed or appropriated as a form of collective punishment
 3. Property and possessions left behind by internally displaced persons should be protected against destruction and arbitrary and illegal appropriation, occupation or use.
- States unanimously agreed at the World Summit 2005⁶⁸ that every state is responsible for the protection of its residents against crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from crimes of atrocity, or is itself committing such crimes, as in the case of the Syrian regime, this means that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner.⁶⁹

66. First Geneva Convention, Article 50 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/365?OpenDocument>

Second Geneva Convention, Article 51 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/370?OpenDocument>

Third Geneva Convention, Article 130 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/375?OpenDocument>

Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 147 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/380?OpenDocument>

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Convention <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>

67. United Nations, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements <https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2&Lang=E>

68. United Nations General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

69. United Nations General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/1>

- The bombardment of IDPs camps and civilian gatherings has created a state of terror and fear among the displaced, substantially exacerbating their already-catastrophic situation that already suffers from an extremely poor humanitarian response.
- International humanitarian law stresses that civilian objects must be provided with special protection. By the same law, targeting those objects constitute a war crime. Article 52 of Protocol I to the Geneva Convention defines civilian objects as “all objects which are not military objects... Military objects are limited to 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, infrastructures, places of worship, and other facilities that are used for civilian purposes.
- The Syrian-Russian alliance forces have violated the de-escalation agreement in all of zones to which it applies, as well as in the areas of Idlib. Those forces have violated the Sochi agreement by bombing a number of villages in towns in de-escalation zone 4, which are demilitarized zones for the most part, in the eastern suburbs of Hama and the southeastern suburbs of Idlib. Those attacks have resulted in civilian casualties.
- The Syrian regime does not care about the political transition process because this would lead to a transition from dictatorship to democracy.
- In times of armed conflict, all civilians must have access to all necessary aid,⁷⁰ according to customary international law.⁷¹
- Russia cannot hide behind the principle of sovereignty and the Syrian regime’s approval, since the regime is the main cause of the displacement of millions of IDPs, and does not care about them having access to UN relief aid.
- Russian forces have violated Security Council Resolution No. 2139, as well as Resolution No. 2254, through indiscriminate bombardment. Additionally, Russian forces have violated many rules of international humanitarian law, committing dozens of violations that amount to war crimes through indiscriminate, disproportionate bombardment, particularly given the use of excessive power in these attacks, as well as violating Article 8 of the Rome Statute by committing intentional homicide, all of which constitute war crimes.

70. Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 23 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/380?OpenDocument>

Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Articles 68, 69, 70, 71 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977?activeTab=1949GCs-APs-and-commentaries>

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, Article 8 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, Article 18 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>

71. “The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control.” International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 55](#) of customary international humanitarian law.

“The parties to the conflict must ensure the freedom of movement of authorized humanitarian relief personnel essential to the exercise of their functions. Only in case of imperative military necessity may their movements be temporarily restricted.” International Committee of the Red Cross, [Rule 56](#) of customary international humanitarian law.

- Russia has used its veto powers 13 times after the beginning of its direct military intervention even though Russia has become a party to the Syrian conflict, which violates the UN Charter. Furthermore, the use of veto powers has been exploited by the Syrian regime to protect its impunity, affording the regime absolute protection. In this, the use of veto powers has been arbitrary and in opposition to human rights.
- Russia has obstructed the political process and caused a suffocating humanitarian crisis that affected millions of IDPs by blocking the UN cross-border aid from freely entering Syria. Russia has been involved with the Syrian regime in displacing the overwhelming majority of IDPs in Syria today.
- The Russian regime has been involved in backing the Syrian regime, and has committed crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people, through shielding the regime politically from international law, as well as through supplying the Syrian regime with weapons and military expertise. This has been abundantly clear since the start of Russia's direct military intervention in favor of the Syrian regime. Supporting a regime that has been involved in crimes against humanity constitutes a categorical violation of international law and makes Russia subject to accountability.
- Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates pursuant to their orders,⁷² if they knew, or had reason to know, that the subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible.⁷³
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham has violated many basic rights, including the right to life. HTS has also practiced multiple other violations such as torture and enforced disappearance, as well as being responsible for numerous war crimes through indiscriminate shelling, looting, abduction, imposing restrictions on women, and restrictions on freedom of movement, and attempting to enforce an extremist religious ideology.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition and Syrian National Army forces have committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, foremost among which are torture, enforced disappearance, looting and theft of property, and ethnic discrimination.
- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have violated many basic rights, including the right to life. These forces have carried out many other violations, including torture, enforced disappearance, displacement and forced conscription, as well as looting the region's natural resources, such as oil and gas, without issuing any financial transparency reports about their revenues and how these are spent. We fear that these funds are likely to be poured into supporting the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), of which the Democratic Union Party is the Syrian branch.

72. "Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed pursuant to their orders." International Committee of the Red Cross, Rule 152 of customary international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule152>

73. "Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates if they knew, or had reason to know, that the subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible." International Committee of the Red Cross, Rule 153 of the customary international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule153>

- The member states of the US-led coalition have also failed during all the years of their presence in Syria, especially since the defeat of the ISIS terrorist group, to achieve political stability in northeast Syria, failing to enable democratic local elections through which power could be handed over to democratically elected local figures who are not affiliated with a particular ethnic or sectarian party.
- Employing remote bombing tactics to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberately callous 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.⁷⁴
- A large proportion of Syrians were killed as a result of landmines, and none of the perpetrator forces in the Syrian conflict have revealed maps of the locations where landmines were planted. This indicates total indifference to the lives of civilians, and children in particular.
- The repercussions of the cumulative and continuous catastrophic violations over eleven years have caused and intensified the collapse of the Syrian state because the Syrian regime is embedded in it as a cancerous body and will not accept any political transition even if Syria turns into the world's most catastrophically failed state, leading to the fragmentation of Syrian society and the displacement of millions.

Recommendations:

UN Security Council and the United Nations:

- The Security Council should take additional steps following the adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly demands that all parties should, "...Immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment,"
- Find ways and mechanisms to implement Security Council Resolutions 2041, 2042, 2139 and Article 12 of Resolution 2254 regarding detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in Syria.
- Take action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to protect detainees from certain death inside detention centers, and to put an end to the pandemic of enforced disappearance that continues to plague Syria, posing a threat to the security and stability of society, act to end torture and deaths due to torture inside Syrian regime detention centers, and save whoever is left among the detainees as quickly as possible.
- Disclose the fate of the nearly 102,000 persons forcibly disappeared in Syria, 85 percent of them by the Syrian regime. Also, call on the Syrian regime to reveal the names of its male and female detainees, publicize lists of the sentences issued, and clarify how such rulings were made under the complete domination of the executive and security branch over the judiciary, especially the Counterterrorism Court and the Field Military Court.

74. Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 27, 31, 32 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/380?OpenDocument>

- Following the failure of the parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to comply with any of the Security Council resolutions concerning the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs or enforced disappearance, the Security Council must, after almost 12 years, intervene militarily in order to protect Syrian civilians.
- Members of the Security Council must stop using their veto to protect the Syrian regime, which has committed hundreds of thousands of violations for over a decade, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Veto is supposed to be a non-option for a state that is involved in a conflict. Russia is directly involved in the Syrian conflict and has been using its veto powers in its own and the Syrian regime's favor, although both are parties to this armed conflict.
- There is a need to refer the Syrian issue from the Security Council to the United Nations General Assembly after more than 10 years of failure on the part of the Security Council to protect civilians or to help in ending the Syrian conflict.
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes should be held accountable.
- Seriously work to achieve a political transition under the Geneva Communiqué and Security Council Resolution No. 2254, to ensure the stability and territorial integrity of Syria, and the dignified and safe return of refugees and IDPs.
- Establish security and peace in Syria and implement the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine in order to preserve Syrians' lives, heritage, and cultural artifacts from being further destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- Monitor the Iranian regime's claims of continuing to supply weapons, equipment and militias to the Syrian regime.
- Ensure the safety and security of millions of Syrian refugees, especially women and children, who have been displaced worldwide, and ensure their safety from arrest, torture or enforced disappearance if they choose to return to areas controlled by the Syrian regime.
- Request all relevant UN agencies to make greater efforts to provide humanitarian and food aid and medical assistance in areas where the fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons' camps, and follow up with those states that have pledged the necessary contributions.
- Allocate a significant amount of money for clearing live mines left over by the Syrian conflict from the United Nations Mine Action Service, particularly in areas prepared to carry out this task with transparency and integrity.
- Stop controlling the UN cross-border relief aid's delivery process, since this is within the scope of the UN General Assembly and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter incapability, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people 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.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine (ICR2P) in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan were exhausted, with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana talks that followed proving equally fruitless. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the norm of the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The UN Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, or quickly establish a tribunal dedicated to trying crimes against humanity and war crimes to end the cycle of impunity that has now lasted for almost 12 years in Syria.
- Expand political and economic sanctions against the Russian regime for committing war crimes in Syria, for continuing to violate sanctions imposed against the Syrian regime, and for assisting it in breaching UN Security Council resolutions, including those regarding non-recurrence of using chemical weapons and barrel bombs.
- Put real pressure on Russia and Iran, and categorize them as key partners in the violations committed in Syria since they continue to supply the Syrian regime with weapons, as well as due to their direct involvement in thousands of violations against Syrian citizens.
- Provide protection and assistance to forcibly displaced women and children, including IDPs and refugees, and take into account their specific needs, primarily for protection.
- All countries worldwide that ratified the CEDAW Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, must fulfill their obligations under these conventions to hold the Syrian regime accountable, expose the regime's criminal practices against Syria's women and children, and make every possible effort to mitigate and stop these.
- Fulfill the commitment of pledged financial contributions:
 - Assist neighboring countries and provide all possible support to increase the level of education and healthcare in these countries which host the largest number of female and child refugees.
 - Establish mechanisms to end the bombing of schools and kindergartens, protect these facilities, and work to create a safe learning environment, which is the least possible level of protection that could be offered for civilians.

- At a minimum, pressure must be applied on the Syrian regime to ensure that international observers, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, are given unconditional and unrestricted access to women and girls in detention centers.
- Support the political transition process and impose pressure to compel the parties to implement the political transition within a time period of no more than six months so that most of the violations end and millions of displaced people can safely and settled return to their homes.
- Stop any forcible return of Syrian refugees, since the situation in Syria continues to be unsafe, and put pressure to achieve a political transition that would ensure the automatic return of millions of refugees.
- Act more urgently towards bringing about a political resolution that would enable the Syrian people to hold free and fair political, parliamentary, and local elections that respect the rules of the electoral process.
- Condemn the laws promulgated by the Syrian regime that violate the rights of millions of the Syrian people, and are enforced through coercion and arms.

Office of the 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.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch extensive investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.
- Work on identifying the responsibility of individuals within the Syrian regime who are involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, publish their names to expose them to international public opinion and end all dealings with them at every political and economic level.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report, and provide an exchange of experiences with Syrian organizations working in the field of documentation, data collection and analysis.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- Create a stable and safe environment for Syrian refugee children and intensify work for their reintegration into society through long-term psychological treatment.
- Increase investment in education and health.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and local and international humanitarian and relief organizations

- Coordinate humanitarian aid operations according to the areas worst affected and reject attempts at pressure and exploitation by the Syrian regime which is working to harness aid to its advantage.
- Allocate adequate resources for the rehabilitation of child and female adult survivors, especially those who have been directly affected by violations, or subjected to violence, sexual exploitation and forced marriage, giving priority to the areas worst affected.

The UN Special Envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of these crimes, including of massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- The Syrian regime is still holding presidential, parliamentary, and local elections with no regard for the negotiation process. The UN special envoy must take a clear position towards the crippled political transition process.
- Call for rapid implementation of democratic political change that restores victims' rights and embodies the principles of transitional justice.
- Clearly assign responsibility to the party responsible for the death of the political process, and disclose to the Syrian people the timing of the end of the political transition process.

Supporting States and European Union

- Support the processes of documenting human rights violations in Syria that expose the Syrian regime's atrocious practices and their continuing nature, as well as the regime's violation of the principles of international law.
- Take further steps towards accelerating the completion of the political transition towards democracy and human rights.
- The situation in Syria is still in a critical state in terms of respecting basic rights, and any citizen may be subjected to arrest under these vague and overly broad laws. Therefore, we recommend that refugees not be returned until such a political transition is achieved, as there will be no stability and security in light of the survival of the current Syrian regime and the Counter-Terrorism Court.
- Economic sanctions imposed on the two main backers of the Syrian regime, namely Iran and Russia, must be intensified, which is something that can be effectively achieved by the European Union. While civilian protection and safe zones are still the primary demands, economic sanctions also remain an effective course of action.
- Provide every possible assistance to the active civil society groups working to rehabilitate and reintegrate female victims into their communities, and support the operations for the support and rehabilitation of female survivors in areas of displacement and asylum.
- Reject viewing the Russian government as part of the dialogue and political transition in Syria should the Russian regime persist in perpetrating widespread and systematic violations against the Syrian people. The use of cluster munitions is clear evidence of the Russian regime's violations.

Neighboring countries

- Ensure that refugees fleeing Syria are able to seek asylum, respect their rights, including the prohibition of refoulement, and expedite reunification. EU states and other countries should alleviate the burden on neighboring countries and receive more Syrian refugees, while donor countries should increase their assistance to the UNHCR and civil societies organizations in countries of asylum.

League of Arab States

- Absolutely reject the return of the Syrian regime to the Arab League in light of its continued involvement up to the present date in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The Syrian regime

- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.
- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Repeal all barbaric laws and inflexible expressions included in these that can be interpreted without limits in order to arrest and torture any political opponent and publish any secret legislation in the official gazette. If these laws are integral to the state security, then at least publish the articles that are relevant to citizens and pose a threat to their lives in accordance with the law on publishing in the official gazette (5/2004).
- Disband the Counterterrorism Court, Military Courts, and Field Military Courts that handle the cases of detainees arrested in the context of the popular uprising since these courts lack any of the fundamental principles of justice. Also, repeal the rulings made by these courts, return the properties seized by them, and compensate their victims.
- Reveal the fate of nearly 95,000 forcibly disappeared persons, and immediately release tens of thousands of arbitrary detainees and detained persons whose sentences have ended.
- Release prisoners of conscience unconditionally, reveal the fate of the disappeared among them, compensate those affected, and stop tampering with their fate and extorting their families.
- Stop treating the Syrian state as private family property.
- Stop terrorizing the Syrian people through enforced disappearances, torture, and death due to torture.
- Stop tampering with the constitution and laws, using them to serve the goals of the ruling family, and enacting deceptive legislation.
- Take responsibility for all legal and material costs and compensate the victims and their families from the resources of the Syrian state.

The Syrian regime's allies, primarily the Russian regime

- Condemn the barbaric courts established by the Syrian regime, and demand that these be abolished along with all the associated sentences and rulings issued by them, including those legitimizing the looting of property and money.
- Put pressure on the Syrian regime to repeal all laws that contradict international human rights law, which use excessively broad and vague language that can be easily applied to political opponents.
- Demand that the Syrian regime separate the different state powers and stop encroaching on judicial and legislative powers.

- top supporting a regime that conducts political trials which are considered the most reprehensible in modern history, since this support is direct complicity and participation in the multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes which the Syrian regime has perpetrated and continues perpetrating against detainees and their property.
- Contribute to dissolving the regime's security services whose members outnumber the army and pose a direct threat to Syrian society, as well as to the country's judiciary and its citizens' human rights.
- Stop supporting the current Syrian regime and apologize to the Syrian people for all violations committed by Russian forces.
- Support a genuine political transition away from the dynastic dictatorship of one family and its brutal security services, since this is the only way to achieve security, stability, and reconstruction.
- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold all those involved accountable.
- Reconstruct and restore the residential buildings and shops destroyed by Russian military forces, and compensate victims throughout the duration of their displacement.
- Stop investing in the Syrian regime, which is hostile to the vast majority of the Syrian people, and which is involved in committing crimes against humanity, and support a process of real political change in order to achieve stability.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary humanitarian law.

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

- The states of the coalition must expedite the process of compensating and apologizing to the victims and all those affected.
- Support a local election process in northeast Syria that leads to the establishment of local councils representing the people of the region and the affiliated military forces, then start to support reconstruction operations.
- 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, including forced conscription, and to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and the principles of international human rights law in the areas under their control.
- Support the process of establishing a genuine local administration in the northeastern regions of Syria, in which all the inhabitants of the region may participate without discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity and without the intervention of the de facto authorities in order to achieve stability and justice.

- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states.
- Support the building and establishment of an independent judiciary that prohibits military parties from forcibly conscripting children.

Syrian Democratic Forces

- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF forces, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and any others affected.
- Stop all forms of child conscriptions, disclose the fate of all forcibly disappeared children, allow their families to visit and communicate with them, in preparation for releasing them.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the SDF planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army

- Ensure the protection of civilians in all the areas under their control. Also, all Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army should distinguish between civilian and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Pledge to cease any conscription of children, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- End arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, confiscation and looting of property, and all other measures that violate the most basic principles of international human rights law.
- Launch investigations into the human rights violations that took place, hold those responsible accountable, and make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people.

Humanitarian Organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons, primarily widows and orphans.

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