

## Statement

### SNHR Welcomes French Judiciary's Issuance of Four Arrest Warrants for Four Senior Regime Officers for Committing War Crimes

SNHR Provided the Examining Magistrates With Large Amounts of Data and Other Evidence on the Syrian Regime's Use of Barrel Bombs



Lieutenant General  
Fahed Jassem al-Fraj



Lieutenant General  
Ali Abdallah Ayoub



Brigadier General  
Ahmad Balloul



Brigadier General  
Ali Safetli

**Monday 23 October 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 analyzes in Syria.

**Wednesday, October 18, 2023: Paris** - French examining magistrates with France's 'War Crimes Unit' issued arrest warrants for four senior officers of Syrian regime forces over their complicity in a war crime in the form of "Intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities" and "Intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, that is, objects which are not military objectives."<sup>1</sup> These charges refer to the officers' involvement in bombardment of the Tareeq al-Sad neighborhood in Daraa city using barrel on June 7, 2017, which killed French citizen Salah Abou Nabbout. One of the barrel bombs struck Salah's house in the neighborhood which was then being used as a school.

Omar Abou Nabbout, the victim's son, filed a complaint with the French court on behalf of his father in 2017. This prompted a judicial investigation to which the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) contributed by supplying the investigating judges with detailed information on the incident in question, as well as securing eyewitnesses and survivors, and giving more extensive information about the Syrian regime's use of barrel bombs. In fact, SNHR released [a report on this incident on July 9, 2017](#).

Furthermore, at the request of the judge handling the case, Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR's Executive Director, testified as an expert witness on the Syrian regime's use of barrel bombs in January 2020.

In June 2022, the examining magistrates filed a request with the French Public Prosecutor to issue international arrest warrants for a number of Syrian officials on the basis of these war crimes. On October 18, 2023, the four arrest warrants were officially issued against the four officers in question, who are: **Lieutenant General Fahed Jassem al-Fraij**, who was the Minister of Defense, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Military and Armed Forces, and Deputy Prime Minister at the time of the attack; **Lieutenant General Ali Abdallah Ayoub**, who was Commander of the General Staff at the time of the attack (the General Staff is the highest-ranking operation room which issues and coordinates military orders and operations carried out by the Military and Armed Forces). In 2018, Ayoub was appointed as a Minister of Defense, Deputy-Commander-in-Chief, and Deputy Prime Minister, and had held those positions until April 2022. The two other officers are **Brigadier General Ahmad Balloul**, who was the Commander of the Air Force at the time of the attack, and **Brigadier General Ali Safetli**, who was the Commander of the 64th Helicopter Brigade at Balli Military Airbase at the time of the attack.

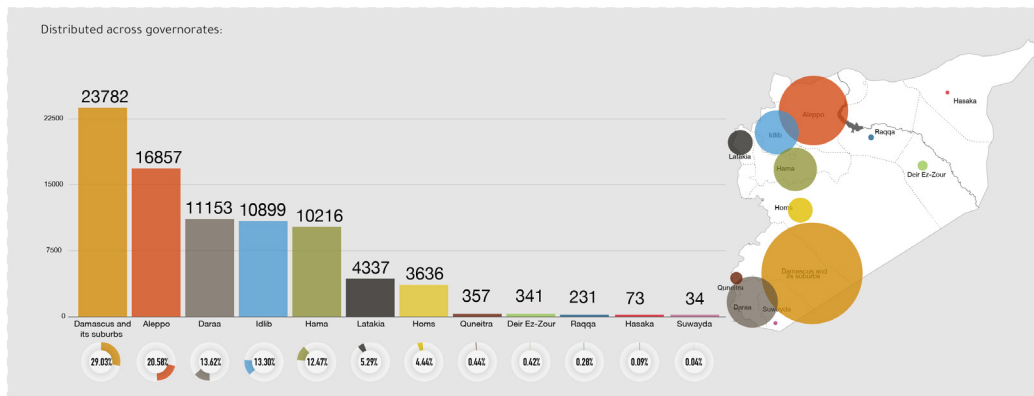
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1. International Criminal Court's Rome Statute, Article 8-2-b-i and 8-2-b-ii. See: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>

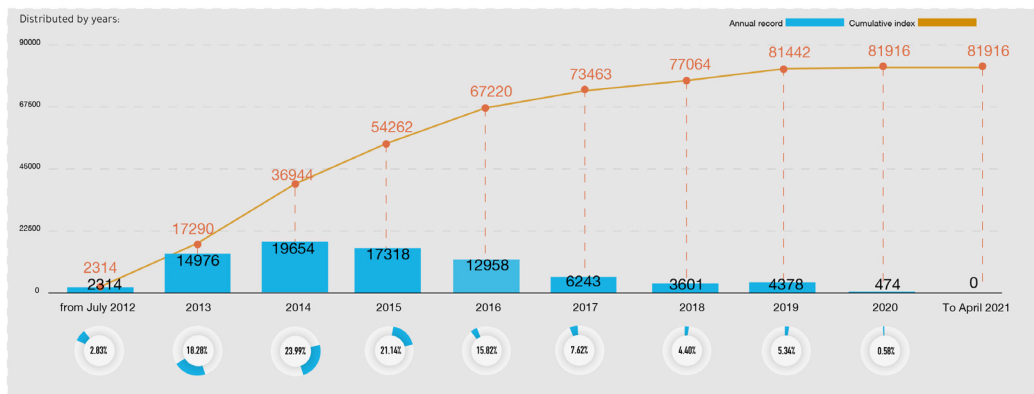
**“Bringing justice to my father is bringing justice to all Syrians; to all the victims who were killed by the barrel bombs dropped by the Bashar Assad regime’s war criminals,”** Omar told SNHR. He stressed that Syrians must be fully committed to hold the regime and war criminals in Syria accountable, noting, **“The path to justice is a long one that commands steadiness in order to do justice to our cause and our victims. We are confronted with a new beginning in Syria, and we must stay the course of justice until its end.”**

It should be noted in this context that SNHR has worked on documenting the use of barrel bombs by the Syrian regime since their first documented use in July 2012. We have published dozens of news articles about the use of barrel bombs, as well as dozens of monthly reports documenting the use of barrel bombs across Syria, and the deaths and destruction wreaked by them.

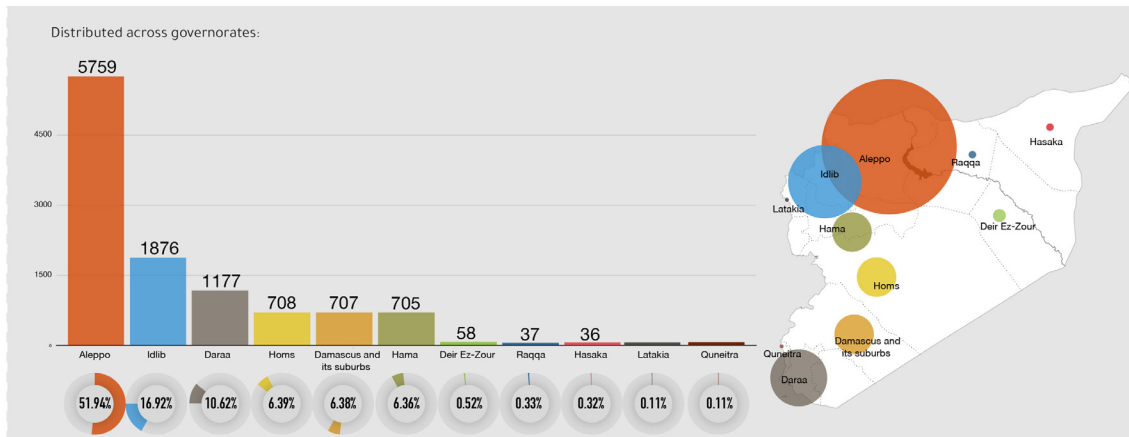
We have also dedicated thematic reports to the use of barrel bombs, including [one released in April 2021](#), in which we documented that Syrian regime air force helicopters dropped approximately 81,916 barrel bombs across Syria between June 2012 and April 2021, killing at least 11,087 civilians, including 1,821 children and 1,780 women (adult female). Barrel bombs have also been used in 728 attacks on vital civilian facilities, including 104 attacks on medical facilities and 188 attacks on schools.



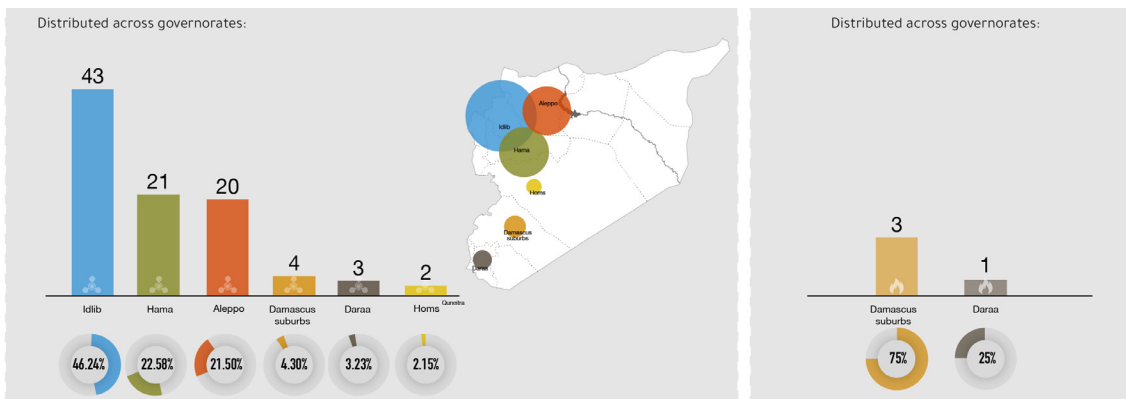
Distributed by years:



Distributed across governorates:



Barrel bombs have also been used as containers for chemical and incendiary weapons. SNHR has documented the use of 93 attacks involving the use of barrel bombs loaded with toxic substances, and four attacks involving the use of barrel bombs loaded with incendiary materials.



SNHR welcomes the issuance of these arrest warrants against the four regime officers: Lieutenant General Fahed Jassem al-Fraji, Lieutenant General Ali Abdallah Ayoub, Brigadier General Ahmad Balloul, and Brigadier General Ali Safetli. This is a positive step on the path of accountability, since it is the first time that a case has been filed over the bombardment of civilian neighborhoods, even though this has been the violation which resulted in the highest number of the documented deaths of Syrians, and which has, in many cases, constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In this context, we must not forget to extend our sincerest gratitude to the eyewitness, civil society organizations, media activists, and victims' families who helped in documenting this incident and the hundreds of other incidents that saw the use of barrel bombs by the Syrian regime, stressing that this documentation could not have been possible without their help.



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*No justice without accountability*

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