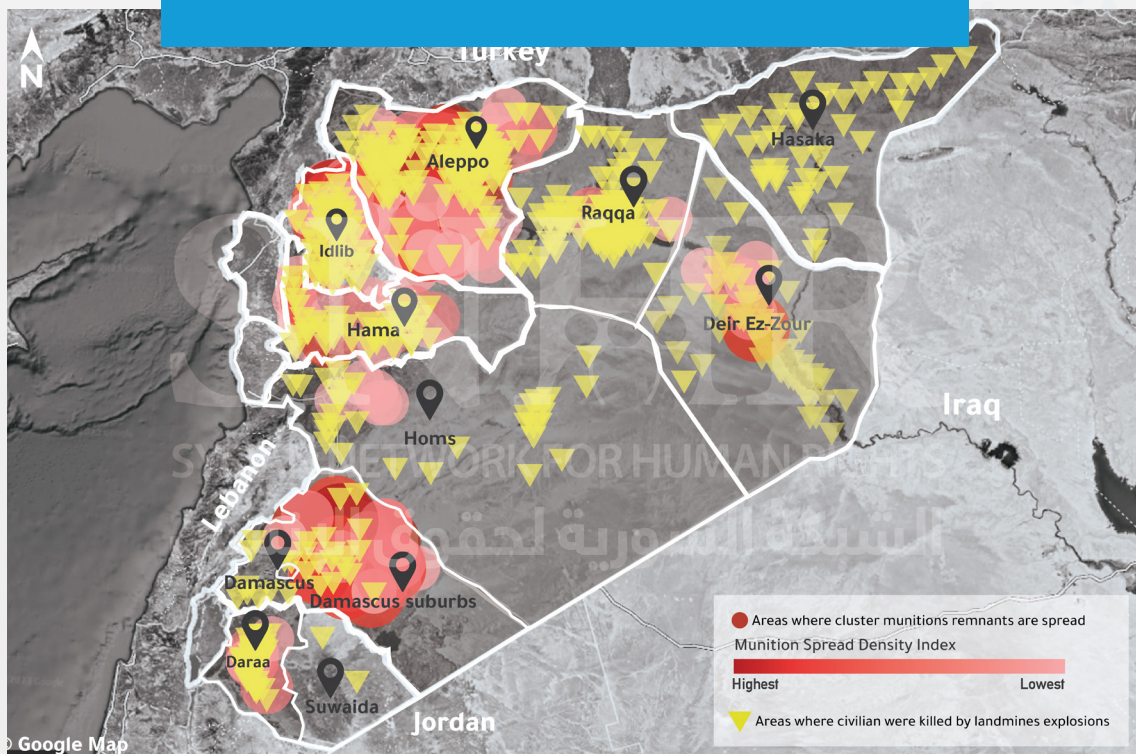


Statement

Maps of the Most Prominent Areas Contaminated by Landmines in Syria, and Recommendations to Address This Issue

45 Civilians Killed by Landmine Explosions Since November 27, Including Six Children and Four Women



Tuesday 31 December 2024

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.

With the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime on December 8, 2024, and the beginning of the return of some of those who have been displaced to their areas, homes and land, another significant challenge has emerged, namely the widespread presence of landmines across vast areas of Syria. These landmines pose a direct threat to the lives of returnees, particularly children. As of this writing, the Syria Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented the deaths of **45 civilians**, including six children and four women, by landmine explosions since the launch of Operation Deter Aggression on November 27, 2024.



THE SPREAD OF LANDMINES AND CLUSTER REMNANTS

Landmines and remnants of cluster munitions are widely spread across many Syrian governorates, threatening the lives of residents. Because of the ease of manufacturing them and their low costs, landmines have been extensively used by various parties to the conflict without regard for marking their locations or removing them afterward. This is particularly evident in governorates that witnessed intense clashes and frequent changes in control over the years.

WHAT ARE LANDMINES?

Anti-personnel landmines (APLs) are defined as a type of munition designed to be installed below the ground or on its surface or below the ground, which are triggered and detonated when either a person or a vehicle touches or approaches them.¹ In accordance with this definition, live cluster munition ordnances that have not yet exploded are considered APLs, since they bear similar characteristics in that they may potentially explode at any moment should any object touch them.

1. APLs are classified as prohibited weapons under international law. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel landmines and on their Destruction, commonly known as the [Ottawa Convention](#), which came into effect in March 1999, has been ratified by the overwhelming majority of nations worldwide, with [164 state parties](#) now having ratified it. As such, the prohibition of the use of landmines is classified as an international custom that is binding on all states which are involved in and parties to a conflict, whether or not they have ratified the Convention.

DOCUMENTATION OF LANDMINE USE IN SYRIA

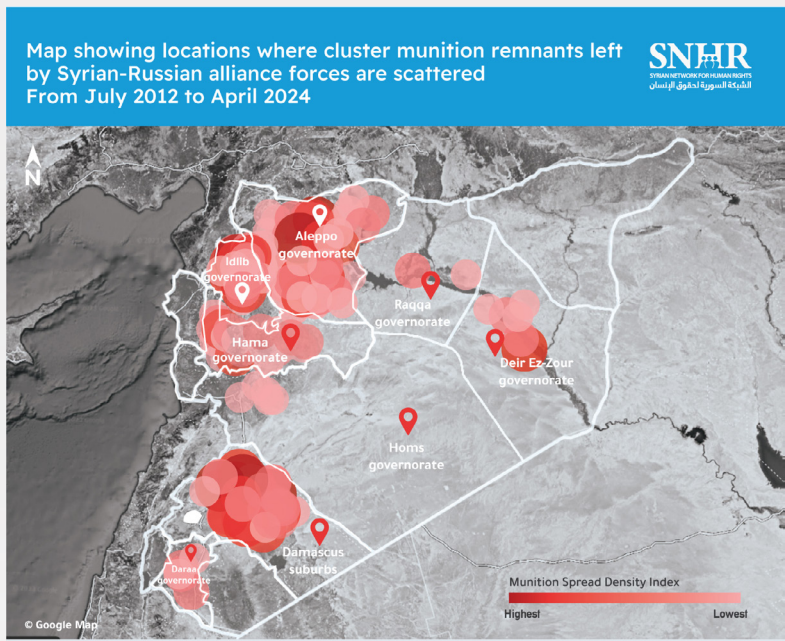
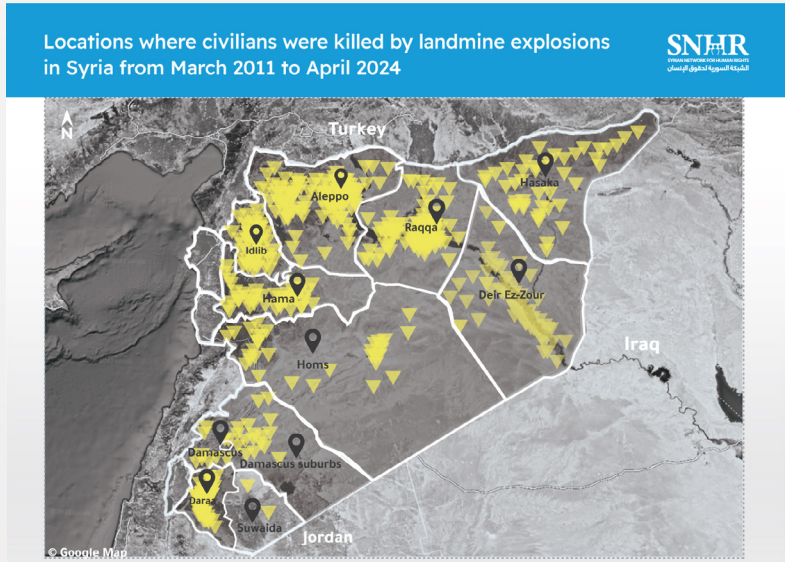
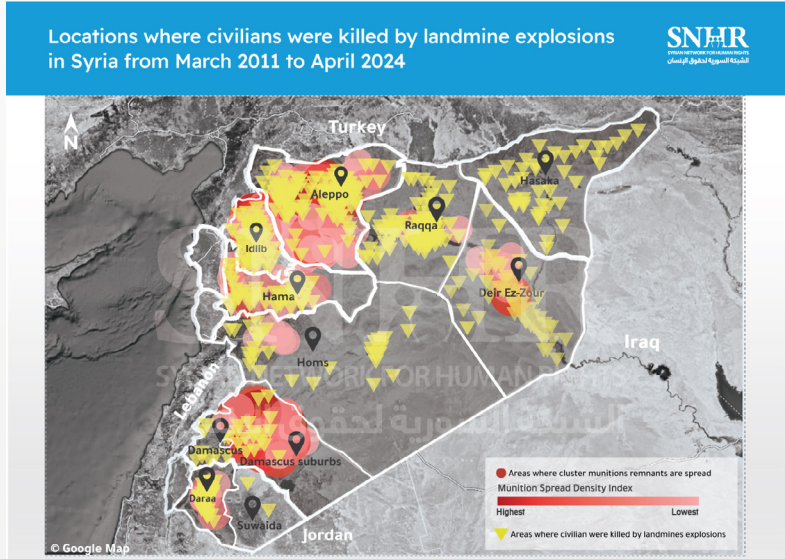
Over the past 14 years, SNHR has documented the frequent use of APLs, including remnants of cluster munitions,² and the resulting deaths and injuries. Although Bashar al-Assad's regime had used these landmines before 2011, their use increased significantly following the outbreak of the popular uprising in March 2011, which later devolved into an internal armed conflict. From late 2011 onwards, the Assad regime began planting landmines along the borders with Lebanon and Turkey³ without providing adequate warnings. Monitoring indicates that other parties to the conflict and controlling forces have also commonly used landmines,⁴ although all documented use of cluster munitions in Syria has been exclusively by the Assad regime and Russian forces.

MAPS OF LANDMINE-CONTAMINATED AREAS IN SYRIA

Since March 2011, all parties to the conflict and controlling forces have planted landmines across vast areas of Syrian territory, with no party issuing any warnings of these contaminated areas or fencing them off to protect the public.

SNHR has utilized the information on its databases, which include detailed documentation of deaths and injuries from landmine and cluster munition explosions, to design maps that illustrate the approximate locations⁵ of landmine-contaminated areas across Syrian governorates.⁶ These maps serve as an essential tool to illustrate the extent of the danger posed by these lethal weapons, which will persist for decades, threatening citizens' lives, particularly children. The maps can also play a vital role in facilitating local demining efforts and increasing awareness among the population and authorities to reduce the number of explosive incidents and ensure that the necessary measures are taken to protect lives.

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2. Anti-personnel landmines (APLs) are defined as a type of munition designed to be installed below the ground or on its surface or below the ground, which are triggered and detonated when either a person or a vehicle touch or approaches them. In accordance with this definition, live cluster munition ordnances that have not yet exploded are considered APLs, since they bear similar characteristics in that they may potentially explode at any moment should any object touch them. In fact, approximately 10-40 percent of cluster submunitions do not explode at the time of the attack. Those can explode at any moment once they are touched. As such, they are effectively landmines.
 3. Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor. (2022). Landmine Monitor 2022. Retrieved December 31, 2024, from <https://bit.ly/49XTFO8>
 4. We recorded no use of landmines by the US-led International Coalition forces and Russian forces.
 5. These maps show the approximate location of areas where victims have been killed by landmine explosions. Due to the nature of the use of landmines, numerous landmines are usually planted in one area, forming what is known as a landmine field, or laid out in the form of two parallel lines, or booby-traps. As such, we suspect that large areas in the vicinity of each location marked on the map might be contaminated with landmines. It should be noted that, when creating these maps, we pinpointed one point for each neighborhood, town, or area, regardless of the number of deaths documented in this area as a result of a landmine explosion, in light of the massive number of potential victims. We tried, as much as possible, to ensure that the maps accurately show those areas with the highest death tolls. It is important to also note that these maps contain only what we have been able to document, and, thus, reflect the bare minimum of incidents or potential danger.
 6. We have also created maps that show areas which we suspect are contaminated with munition remnants, submunitions, and bomblets left over from cluster munitions attacks. It should be noted that those areas marked on the maps reflect only the cluster munitions attacks we have been able to document and the resulting deaths from the explosion of submunitions. As such, they reflect the bare minimum of the scope of the dispersion of those submunitions. We have faced various challenges in creating these maps which, in one way or another, affect the accuracy of the process of pinpointing those areas. We tried insofar as possible to design those maps in a way that show the areas that saw the highest frequencies of attacks and deaths. For more details on those challenges see:
Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2023. January 31). Cluster Munitions Remnants are an Open-Ended Threat to the Lives of Syria's Future Generations. Retrieved on December 31, 2024, from <https://snhr.org/?p=59103>



THOUSANDS KILLED AND INJURED DUE TO LANDMINE EXPLOSIONS IN SYRIA SINCE 2011

SNHR has documented the deaths of at least **3,521 civilians** as a result of landmine explosions between March 2011 and the end of 2024. This includes **931 children** and **362 women**, in addition to **seven Civil Defense personnel, eight medical workers,** and nine media workers. Since November 27, 2024, a total of 45 civilians, including six children and four women, have been killed.

INJURIES CAUSED BY LANDMINES

Landmine explosions have caused severe injuries and disfigurement among many civilians, with an explosion typically causing hundreds of shrapnel fragments to penetrate victims' bodies, often resulting in amputations, torn arteries, and cellular damage, along with impairments to hearing or vision.

While determining the exact number of injured individuals is challenging, SNHR estimates that at least **10,400 civilians** have sustained varying degrees of injuries in landmine explosions. A significant number of them subsequently require prosthetic limbs, alongside a long process of rehabilitation and psychological support.

IMPACT OF LANDMINES ON SOCIETY

Landmines represent a major obstacle to the return of displaced persons to their homes and hinder the movement of relief workers and Civil Defense teams and their equipment. Additionally, they pose a significant threat to reconstruction and development efforts, exacerbating Syria's already immense humanitarian and economic burdens.

WHAT IS SNHR DOING ABOUT THE LANDMINE ISSUE IN SYRIA?

As a member of [the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munition Coalition \(ICBL-CMC\)](#), SNHR regularly provides the coalition with documented field data from Syria. We believe that many landmine fields remain undiscovered to this day. SNHR reiterates its commitment to working toward a world free of landmines and cluster munitions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UN and international community

1. Support landmine clearance operations

- Increase logistical support: Provide additional support to local organizations, such as civil defense and specialist demining police units, to detect and dismantle landmines.
- Train Syrian organizations: Enhance the capacity of local organizations to clear landmines and unexploded cluster munitions while raising community awareness of related risks and identifying the most heavily contaminated areas.
- Allocate financial resources: Ensure substantial funding from the United Nations fund dedicated to assisting in the clearance of landmines resulting from the Syrian conflict.
- Advocate for sustained demining efforts: Guarantee continued international support for landmine clearance efforts in affected areas to mitigate long-term risks.
- Support community initiatives: Increase funding and technical assistance for demining programs while encouraging local community participation in clearance operations.

New Syrian government

1. landmine and war remnants removal

- Ensure a safe and risk-free environment for returning displaced persons.

2. Identify hazardous areas

- Clearly and visibly mark areas suspected to be contaminated with landmines.

3. Assist victims

- Provide medical aid, rehabilitation, and psychological support to survivors of landmine-related incidents to facilitate their reintegration into society.
- Implement awareness programs targeting high-risk groups, such as children, to increase knowledge of landmine dangers.
- Publish updated maps of contaminated areas and warn civilians to avoid them.
- Include instructions on the dangers of landmines in school curricula and community awareness programs tailored to different age groups.
- Commit to international treaties such as the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and the Convention on Cluster Munitions to ensure these weapons are not used in the future.

Syrian society, especially in areas near landmine contamination

General safety practices

1. Avoid hazardous areas

- Stay away from sites with warning signs or suspected landmine contamination, such as abandoned military zones, trenches, and airfields.

2. Do not touch suspicious objects

- Refrain from touching or moving any unidentified objects, as these may be explosive remnants of war or landmines. Children must also be taught that such objects are not toys.

3. Report suspicious objects

- Identify the location of landmines or unexploded munitions from a safe distance and report them to local authorities or demining teams like the Civil Defense.

4. Travel safely

- Stick to using clear and well-organized paths, avoiding shortcuts through fields or areas that have not been confirmed as cleared.

Special guidelines for children

1. Risk awareness

- Introduce educational programs about the dangers of landmines in schools and local communities in a manner appropriate for the juvenile audience's ages.
- Encourage children to consult adults about safe areas and routes before playing in remote locations.

2. Emergency response

- Advise children to remain still and call for help if they suspect they are in a contaminated area, refraining from movement until a specialist team arrives.

Guidelines for farmers

1. Safe agricultural practices

- Avoid cultivating uncleared lands and collaborate with demining teams to identify safe areas for farming.

2. Livestock management

- Prevent livestock from grazing in contaminated areas to reduce the risk of explosions.

Community-based measures

Reporting networks

- Establish community communication channels to report the presence of landmines or unexploded ordnance, ensuring their swift removal by specialist teams.



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No justice without accountability

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