

## Statement

**Three Civilians** Killed and 34 Others Wounded in Israeli Bombing Targeting the Ministry of Defense Headquarters in Damascus on July 16, 2025

Saturday 19 July 2025



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.

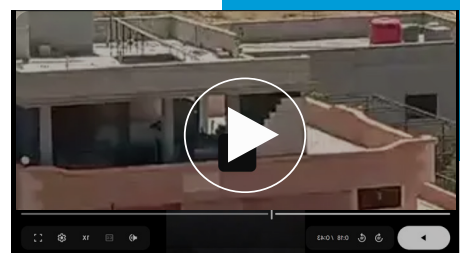
**On Wednesday, July 16, 2025,** Israeli occupation forces launched a series of airstrikes targeting the Ministry of Defense Headquarters in Umayyad Square, in the center of the capital Damascus, one of the most densely populated areas in the City.

The first raid began at 12:30 p.m. by what is believed to be a drone, without causing any direct casualties. This was followed, at around 3:15 p.m., three consecutive air strikes were carried out by warplanes on the same building, the third of which killed **three people**, including [Ms. Arij Ayman Al-Ra'i](#), and injured [at least 34 civilians with varying degrees of severity](#), in addition to causing [extensive damage to the Ministry of Defense Headquarters' building](#). The area surrounding [the People's Palace - the presidential resident - was also targeted](#) by a fourth strike, with no confirmed reports of casualties.



A video showing the moment the Ministry of Defense HQ building in Damascus was hit by Israeli airstrikes.

on July 16, 2025 | Open Sources



The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) continues to monitor and document violations committed by Israeli occupation forces inside Syrian territory, including airstrikes, incursions, ground raids, and related repercussions. This includes civilian casualties, arbitrary arrests, attacks on medical and media personnel, destruction of property, and encroachment on agricultural land and infrastructure within the targeted areas.

The targeting of the Ministry of Defense Headquarters in Umayyad Square is a dangerous escalation, both in terms of the nature of the target and its location within a vital civilian area.

It is worth noting that on July 15, 16, and 17, 2025, southern Syria witnessed Israeli occupation aircraft carrying out a series of airstrikes targeting the governorates of Suwayda, Daraa, and the Rif Dimashq, which focused on the locations of Internal Security forces and of the Syrian Transitional Government's Ministry of Defense, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries.

## Legal Conclusions:

- The air strikes carried out by Israeli forces on July 16, 2025, targeting the Ministry of Defense Headquarters in Damascus, constitute a violation of Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.
- The Israeli authorities did not issue any official announcement or notification to the UN Security Council indicating the existence of an imminent armed threat that would justify the use of force under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which negates the condition of legitimate self-defense.
- The nature of the targeted site, located in a densely populated civilian area, indicates a possible violation of the principle of distinction set forth in Article 48 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, which requires a distinction to be made between military targets and civilians.
- The third strike, which resulted in the majority of human casualties, may be considered a violation of the principle of proportionality set forth in Article 51(5-b) of Additional Protocol I, if the resulting civilian damage was excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage.
- Based on the available information, it has not been established that the perpetrator took all feasible precautions to minimize civilian damage, as required by Article 57 of Additional Protocol I.
- The repetition of military strikes without accountability or commitment to international legal procedures constitutes a violation of the principle of international law and undermines the basis for the prohibition of the use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

## Recommendations

### **First: To the United Nations Security Council**

- Emphasize the need to respect the provisions of the United Nations Charter, particularly Article 2(4) concerning the prohibition of the use of force in international relations and consider any military action outside this framework to be legally accountable.
- Call on Member States, including Israel, to strictly adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law in all military operations and to provide clear legal justifications for any use of force outside its borders, based on Article 51 of the Charter.
- Work to hold Israel accountable and make it bear direct responsibility for the consequences of violating the sovereignty of a member state of the United Nations Charter.

### **Second: To the Syrian Transitional Government**

- Carry out a comprehensive and systematic documentation of all violations resulting from Israeli air strikes or ground incursions into Syrian territory, including the location of targets, the nature of casualties, and the timing of each incident. Demand that Israel pays full compensation to victims and for material damage.
- Submit detailed memoranda to the United Nations, the Security Council, and the International Court of Justice (either directly or through supporting countries), including a legal presentation of the violation of Syrian sovereignty, supported by data and evidence.

### **Third: To the International Commission of Inquiry, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the relevant Special Rapporteurs**

- Include violations related to the use of Israeli force in Syria in periodic reports submitted to the Human Rights Council, with a recommendation to open a path for international accountability and compensation for confirmed violations.
- Demand that Israel cooperates with the relevant UN mechanisms and provide legal justifications for any military operations it carries out inside Syrian territory, in accordance with its obligations as a member state of the United Nations. Pay all compensation owed.

### **Fourth: To international and regional human rights organizations**

- Continue to document and monitor Israeli military violations and incursions against civilians and infrastructure in Syria, develop legal and technical databases to support accountability efforts, and clearly condemn them.
- Support international legal initiatives aimed at promoting respect for the principle of non-use of force and protecting civilians in the context of protracted conflicts or cross-border military operations.
- Strengthen coordination between Syrian and international organizations in order to prepare comprehensive legal files that can be used in the future in international judicial proceedings or transitional justice mechanisms in Syria.



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*No justice without accountability*

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