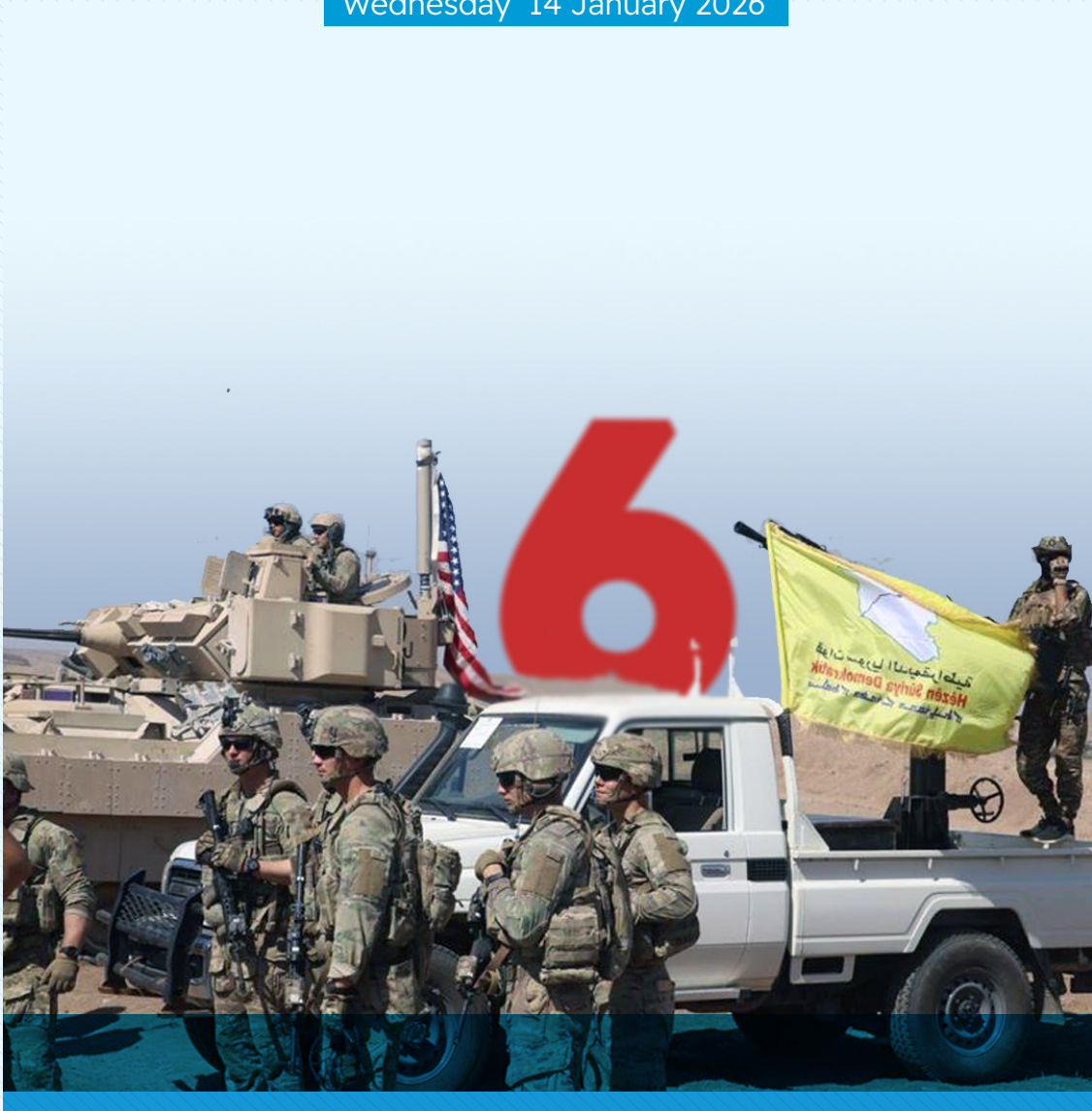




الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Six Civilians including a Child and a Woman were Documented as Killed During Raids Carried Out by the SDF with the Support of the International Coalition Forces

Wednesday 14 January 2026





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.

Contents:

Introduction	1
First: Theiiban town, eastern Deir Ez-Zour countryside (December 21, 2025).....	1
Second: New town of Kahit, eastern countryside of Raqqa Governorate (December 23, 2025).....	2
Third: Condemnation, Conclusions, and Recommendations	4

INTRODUCTION

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented the killing of **six civilians**, including a child and a woman, in two separate incidents that occurred during raids carried out by elements of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with air support from aircraft belonging to the International Coalition, in the town of Theiban in the eastern countryside of Deir Ez-Zour Governorate on December 21, 2025, and the town of Jadida Kahit in the eastern countryside of Raqqa Governorate on December 23, 2025. The Network also documented the arrest of a number of civilians during those raids without the presentation of any judicial warrants, and without explaining the legal reasons that justify the deprivation of liberty.

This statement details the two incidents, condemns the killings and arbitrary arrests that occurred during them, which, according to international legal standards, are classified as extrajudicial killings, and provides a preliminary legal characterization of the possible violations and associated responsibilities.

FIRST: THEIIBAN TOWN, EASTERN DEIR EZ-ZOUR COUNTRYSIDE (DECEMBER 21, 2025)

At dawn on **Sunday, December 21, 2025**, elements of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with direct support from aircraft belonging to the International Coalition forces, carried out a large-scale raid and arrest campaign in the town of Dhiban, which resulted in the killing of three civilians, including a child, and the arbitrary arrest of six other civilians from the local population.

According to documentation by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the forces raided a number of residential homes, including homes belonging to the Al-Ali Al-Nasser family, where the following were killed:

- Ghannam Sabouh Al-Ali Al-Nasser.
- The child, Mo'men Sabouh Al-Ali Al-Nasser, is 16 years old.

This occurred during the raid as a result of gunfire from the raiding forces. According to information obtained by the network, the bodies of the two victims were transferred to the Al-Omar oil field. The network also documented the arbitrary arrest and detention of **three other civilians** from the same family.

In a related context, the forces raided a house belonging to the Al Jabr Al Attiya family, where the civilian Da'ar Al Jabr Al Attiya, aged 60, was killed as a result of gunfire by the raiding elements, and one of his sons was arrested without presenting any legal arrest warrant.

Forces also raided the home of civilian Farhan al-Salem and arrested his son, Hamza Abu Madin. All raids and arrests were carried out without any legal basis or the presentation of official warrants.

According to local and field sources, the campaign was accompanied by a heavy security presence and warplane flights, causing panic and fear among civilians, without any armed clashes being reported, and without any specific and clear accusations being made against the people who were targeted or arrested.

SECOND: NEW TOWN OF KAHIT, EASTERN COUNTRYSIDE OF RAQQA GOVERNORATE (DECEMBER 23, 2025)

On Tuesday, December 23, 2025, at approximately 1:30 a.m., a security patrol belonging to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with air cover from the International Coalition, raided a civilian family's home in the town of Jadida Kahit, under the pretext of searching for a wanted individual. The operation resulted in the killing of three civilians, including an elderly woman (a mother and her two sons):

- Ms. Fatim Al-Battal, 70 years old.
- Jasim Mohammed Al-Hassan Al-Laji, 38 years old.
- Ibrahim Mohammed Al-Hassan Al-Laji, 27 years old.

According to what was documented by SNHR, the raiding force fired live ammunition directly inside the house, which led to the killing of the three victims during the raid, without any armed resistance or clash being recorded, which suggests that they were subjected to a field execution.

The information obtained by the network confirmed that the victims were civilians working in the management of a small bakery within the town, and they had never belonged to any military or political entity, nor had any security-related activities been recorded against them.

In a subsequent statement issued by the Syrian Democratic Forces, it stated that the operation was carried out under the pretext of “belonging to ISIS,” claiming that two members from inside the house initiated gunfire towards the patrol, so the raiding elements responded to them, which led to their injury and death, and the injury of the woman who later died, without providing any material evidence or judicial orders to support this narrative.

The available information also indicated that the international coalition forces participated in the operation based on data provided by the Syrian Democratic Forces, as they provided air cover, while the Syrian Democratic Forces carried out the direct raid and shooting inside the house, which led to the killing of the three civilian victims.

Witnesses and local sources contacted by the network reported that the operation did not target the victims for individual security reasons, but rather, according to these statements, it came in the context of collective punishment due to the presence of a third brother of the family named Ahmed al-Laji, who was wanted by the Syrian Democratic Forces, and had previously participated in popular celebrations that followed the fall of Bashar al-Assad’s regime in the town of al-Karama in the countryside of Raqqa, before later moving to areas under the control of the Syrian government and joining the Syrian army.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is continuing its investigations into the two incidents mentioned in this statement, including reviewing and gathering further evidence and information. Therefore, the SNHR urges anyone with additional information or details related to either of these incidents to contact them via their official email address: info@snhr.org

THIRD: CONDEMNATION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights strongly condemns the killing of six civilians, including a child and a woman, during raids carried out by the Syrian Democratic Forces in the rural areas of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa. It affirms that the killings that occurred are extrajudicial killings carried out through summary or arbitrary procedures, and constitute a serious violation of the right to life guaranteed under international human rights law, in addition to the arbitrary arrests that accompanied those operations without legal basis.

Conclusions

1. The killing of the **six civilians** during raids conducted by the Syrian Democratic Forces, in the absence of any indication of armed clashes or imminent threat, legally constitutes an extrajudicial killing, which is absolutely prohibited under international human rights law, particularly **Article 6** of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Even assuming that the operations were carried out within the framework of law enforcement or counter-terrorism, they would still fall under the standards of international human rights law. Accordingly, the killing of six civilians, including a child and an elderly woman, during nighttime raids without warrants constitutes an extrajudicial execution or summary killing.
2. **Unlawful use of lethal force:** In accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, lethal force may only be used when strictly necessary to protect life. In both incidents, **the facts showed no indications of:**
 - Real armed resistance.
 - A direct threat to the lives of the raiding officers.
 - Exhaustion of less lethal means.

Therefore, shooting inside residential homes constitutes an excessive and disproportionate use of force.

3. Carrying out raids and arrests without judicial warrants, and arbitrarily detaining civilians, constitute a grave violation of guarantees of personal freedom and fair trial, and violate relevant international standards.
4. These incidents confirm a disturbing pattern of violations associated with security raids, which reflects a failure to respect the principle of protecting civilians, and requires the opening of independent and transparent investigations that lead to accountability and the prevention of impunity.

- 5. Possible liability of international coalition forces:** The participation of international coalition aircraft in providing air cover for operations, based on information provided by the Syrian Democratic Forces, requires investigation according to the principle of joint or indirect responsibility, especially if it is proven that this participation contributed to facilitating the commission of violations, or was not accompanied by sufficient independent verification procedures.

Recommendations:

1. Immediate cessation by the Syrian Democratic Forces of the use of lethal force during raid operations, strict adherence to the principles of necessity, proportionality and protection of civilians, opening independent and transparent investigations into all documented killing incidents, and holding those responsible accountable.
2. Immediately release all those arbitrarily detained, or refer them to the competent judiciary in accordance with fair trial guarantees, and reveal the fate of all those arrested during the recent security campaigns.
3. The international coalition forces must review the rules of engagement and support mechanisms provided to the Syrian Democratic Forces, ensure that they are not involved, directly or indirectly, in operations that violate international human rights law, and open an internal investigation into the extent of their compliance with their legal obligations.
4. The United Nations and relevant international mechanisms must seriously monitor these violations and exert the necessary pressure to ensure accountability and prevent the recurrence of extrajudicial killings in northern and eastern Syria.
5. SNHR affirms the right of victims and their families to redress and reparation, including fair compensation and guarantees of non-repetition, in accordance with relevant international standards.
6. The Syrian Democratic Forces must establish a permanent and effective internal investigation mechanism, functionally independent from the field command chain, to receive and investigate complaints regarding killings, abuse of force, and detention, while ensuring the protection of whistleblowers and witnesses and preventing any acts of reprisal against them.
7. The Syrian Democratic Forces must suspend the duties of elements suspected of involvement in killings, unlawful use of force, or arbitrary arrests until investigations are completed, refer those involved to disciplinary and criminal accountability bodies, and publish the results of investigations and accountability measures publicly to the extent permitted by witness protection and procedural integrity.

8. The Syrian Democratic Forces must adopt written and binding protocols for raids and arrests, including clear rules for the escalation of force, a ban on firing inside residences except when there is an imminent threat to life, requiring personnel to identify themselves and demonstrate the basis for arrest, and documenting operations in the field through official records and body cameras wherever possible.
9. The Syrian Democratic Forces must ensure effective judicial oversight of deprivation of liberty by establishing an immediate referral pathway to a competent judicial authority, enabling detainees to contact a lawyer and inform their families of their place of detention, and establishing a central, public register with a minimum of basic data on detainees that allows verification and reduces the risks of enforced disappearance.
10. The international coalition should adopt an independent and enhanced verification policy before providing any air or logistical support for law enforcement operations, including assessing the risk of harm to civilians, verifying the existence of a legal and procedural basis for raids, and suspending support when there are serious indications of violations or a lack of sufficient safeguards.
11. The international coalition must open transparent internal investigations into the role of its units or air assets in the two operations, determine whether pre-strike or pre-support verification procedures met the standard of due diligence, and announce the results and remediation plans, including reparation if a direct or indirect contribution to violations is proven.
12. The international coalition must establish a formal mechanism for receiving civilian complaints, documenting and verifying damages, providing an effective compensation or redress pathway, and ensuring cooperation with independent investigative bodies, including providing them with non-sensitive data necessary to assess the facts, such as flight patterns, coordination, and relevant operational communications where possible.
13. The United Nations, and in particular the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant special mechanisms, should activate regular monitoring of these incidents, demand that the de facto authorities take time-bound corrective actions, including investigation, accountability and guarantees of non-recurrence, and include these incidents in periodic public reports.
14. Independent international mechanisms concerned with Syria should strengthen the collection and preservation of evidence related to the unlawful use of force, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detention in accordance with evidentiary standards, in order to support future national or international accountability pathways, while giving priority to witness protection and data integrity.

15. The judicial authorities and local police forces already in place in northern and eastern Syria must develop legal oversight frameworks for law enforcement, including clear rules for arrest and search, complaint procedures, the independence of prosecution and investigation, and the prevention of extrajudicial detention.
16. Donors and supporting countries should link any institutional, training, or logistical support to concrete compliance measures, including written policies on the use of force, effective internal investigation mechanisms, transparency procedures, mandatory training on international human rights law, with periodic reviews to measure compliance and the possibility of suspending support in case of non-compliance.
17. Local and international human rights organizations should intensify field monitoring, document testimonies and material evidence, provide legal assistance to victims and their families, support complaint mechanisms, and work to build accountability files that can be referred to competent judicial authorities, without compromising the confidentiality and security of witnesses.
18. The Syrian Democratic Forces and relevant authorities must establish a formal and regular channel of communication with the families of the victims and the local community, including immediate notification of the facts, handing over the bodies in accordance with human dignity procedures, providing reliable information on the progress of the investigation, and adopting initial reparation measures, including psychological, social and relief support when needed.
19. Emphasizing the right of victims and their families to redress and compensation, including restitution, fair compensation, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition, while establishing a practical mechanism for assessing, documenting, and disbursing compensation, and ensuring that administrative settlements are not used as a substitute for criminal accountability when there are serious indications of crimes being committed.

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