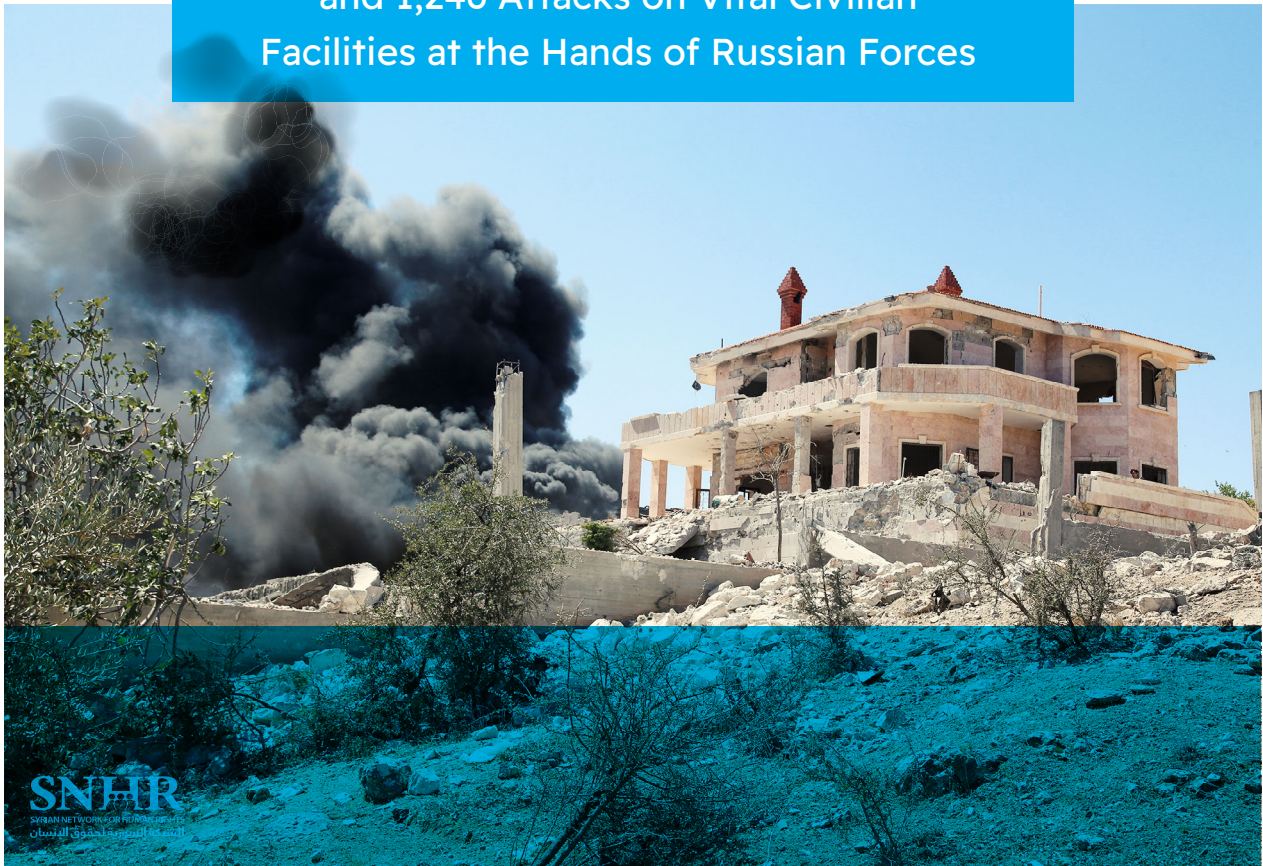


SNHR's Eighth Annual Report on the Most Notable Violations by Russian Forces Since the Launch of Russia's Military Intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015

**6,954 Civilians Killed, Including 2,046 Children,
and 1,246 Attacks on Vital Civilian
Facilities at the Hands of Russian Forces**



Saturday 30 September 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. Report Methodology

On September 30, 2015, Russia launched its military intervention in Syria, becoming a full-fledged party to the Syrian conflict. Since the very first days of its intervention in Syria, Russia has bombarded heavily populated civilian areas. As Russia continued its bombing, it quickly became evident that we needed to build a database specifically dedicated to documenting Russia's violations in Syria, which, in addition to both deliberate and indiscriminate bombardment, also includes killings, forced displacement, and the use of cluster munitions, as well as other types of violations, for which Russia and the Syrian regime share responsibility, with the two allied regimes fighting on the same side. However, it was imperative to distinguish which attacks have been committed specifically by Russia and which by the Syrian regime, since it is a core part of SNHR's mission to determine the parties responsible for violations.

In carrying out this work, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) team has utilized our well-developed methodology, drawing upon our diverse and extensive network of relationships and sources built up over the years since 2011, in addition to attempting to pinpoint the exact Russian airbases from which attacks were launched and at which the warplanes carrying out attacks were based, as well as ascertaining the models of these aircraft and the types of weapons used. Additionally, in assigning culpability to Russian forces for certain attacks, we assessed the different nature of the attacks and the varying destructive capabilities between Russian attacks and those by Syrian regime forces. Other factors taken into consideration include the fact that Russia's air force, unlike its Syrian regime counterparts, has the ability to carry out flights and bombing runs at night, while Russian ground forces use more accurate weapons.

It is a fairly straightforward process to determine which aerial attacks are carried out by Russian forces, which can be done simply by finding out the model of the plane responsible for carrying out the attack and the type of weapon used, in addition to utilizing other factors that help identify Russian warplanes. In the case of ground attacks, however, the task of identifying whether the aggressors behind any attack were Syrian regime or Russian forces is more complex. As mentioned earlier, even when responsibility for attacks is not assigned precisely, it is important to bear in mind that Russian forces and Syrian regime forces are parts of the same alliance and bear joint responsibility. Furthermore, most of the Syrian regime's weapons are Russian, and the Syrian regime is responsible for bringing Russia to Syria.

SNHR also analyzed numerous relevant videos and photos posted online, or sent to us by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or via our social media platforms. Much of the footage shared by activists shows the sites of the attacks, the victims' bodies, the injured, and the massive destruction caused by those attacks.

We have stored copies of all the photos and videos included in this report in a secret database, as well as retaining backup offline copies on hard drives. Despite this, however, we cannot claim to have documented all the cases in light of the proscriptions and persecution inflicted on SNHR by the Syrian regime and other armed groups. For further information, readers can read more about the methodology adopted by SNHR [here](#).

We release [an annual report](#) on September 30 of every year to observe this bitter anniversary for our people and our country, using this occasion to document the violations committed by Russian forces during the previous year (between last year's September 30, and this year's). In this annual report, we provide the latest, updated figures on all the violations documented in the past year and since the initial intervention in order to give some idea of the staggering magnitude of the catastrophe that Russia has inflicted on Syria in terms of casualties and material losses. The societal and psychological damage inflicted by Russia requires a separate report of a different kind, especially in light of the displacement of millions of Syrians who have lost their homes, possessions, livelihoods and everything else as a direct result of Russia's military intervention.

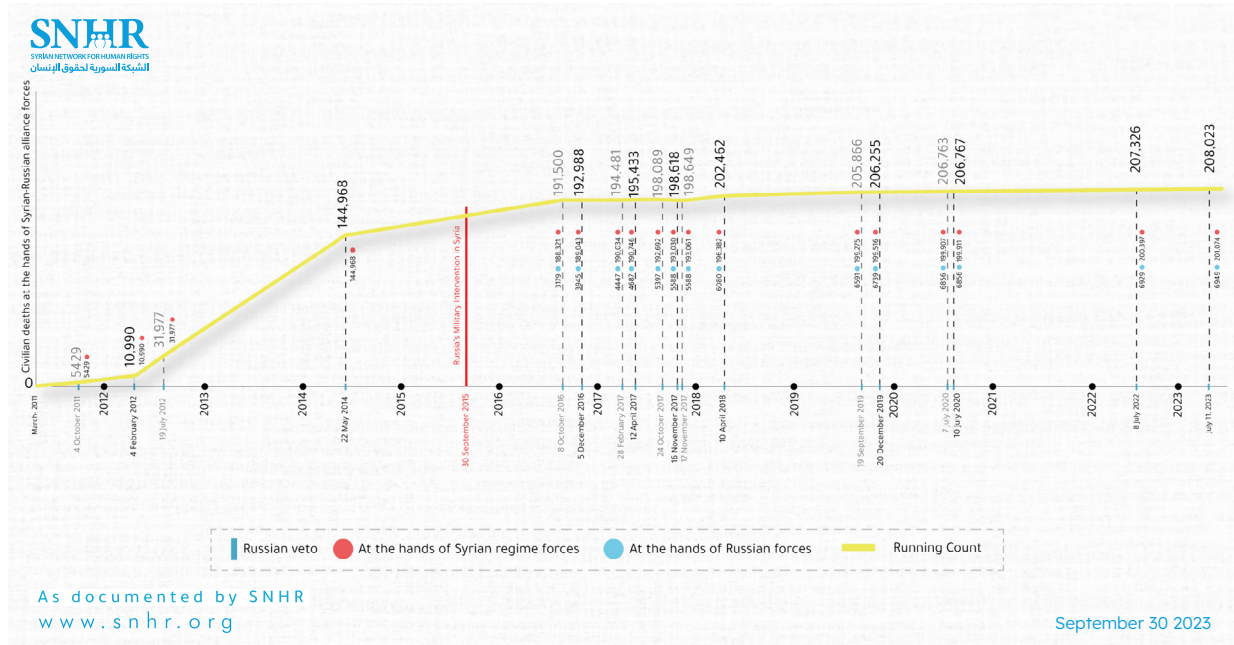
II. Brief Background on the Russian Intervention to Support the Syrian Regime

Russia has played an instrumental role in obstructing the will of the Syrian people who have called for a transition from dictatorship to a free democratic system since the Syrian popular uprising of March 2011. In its attempts to justify its position, behavior, and support of the Assad regime, Moscow has given different, and sometimes contradictory, supposed pretexts, such as claiming that the Syrian popular uprising is backed by the West, and will only lead to more anarchy in the region. On other occasions, Russia has asserted that any change could only take place in a calm, organized fashion from within the institutions of the existing Syrian regime. Russia has baldly made those claims despite being fully and unequivocally aware that the Syrian regime will never consent to any serious transformative process that would lead to limiting its powers and privileges, or that could in any way reduce its unrestricted legislative and executive powers. Russia is also fully aware that a popular uprising is the only possible option for bringing about real political change in Syria due to the nation being ruled by a regime known for being unapologetically oppressive and draconian, which has ruthlessly set about eliminating any space for dissent or independent political activity in Syria since the 1970s.

Over the course of the popular uprising in Syria, Russia has shielded and backed the Syrian regime logistically, politically, economically, and militarily. In the political sphere, Russia has provided support through blocking any international condemnation at the UN Security Council, which has been effectively crippled, preventing it from taking any meaningful action in relation to the Syrian regime's crimes against humanity, thanks to Russia's using its veto powers on 18 separate occasions - four times before the launch of its military intervention and 14 times since.

Moreover, Russia has also voted against all resolutions condemning the Syrian regime's violent and brutal treatment of any opposition at all on 21 occasions during UN Human Rights Council sessions. Even more damningly, Russia has mobilized allied or subservient states, including Algeria, Venezuela and Cuba, to do the same.

Russia's use of veto powers at the Security Council against civilian deaths at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces from March 2011 until July 11, 2023

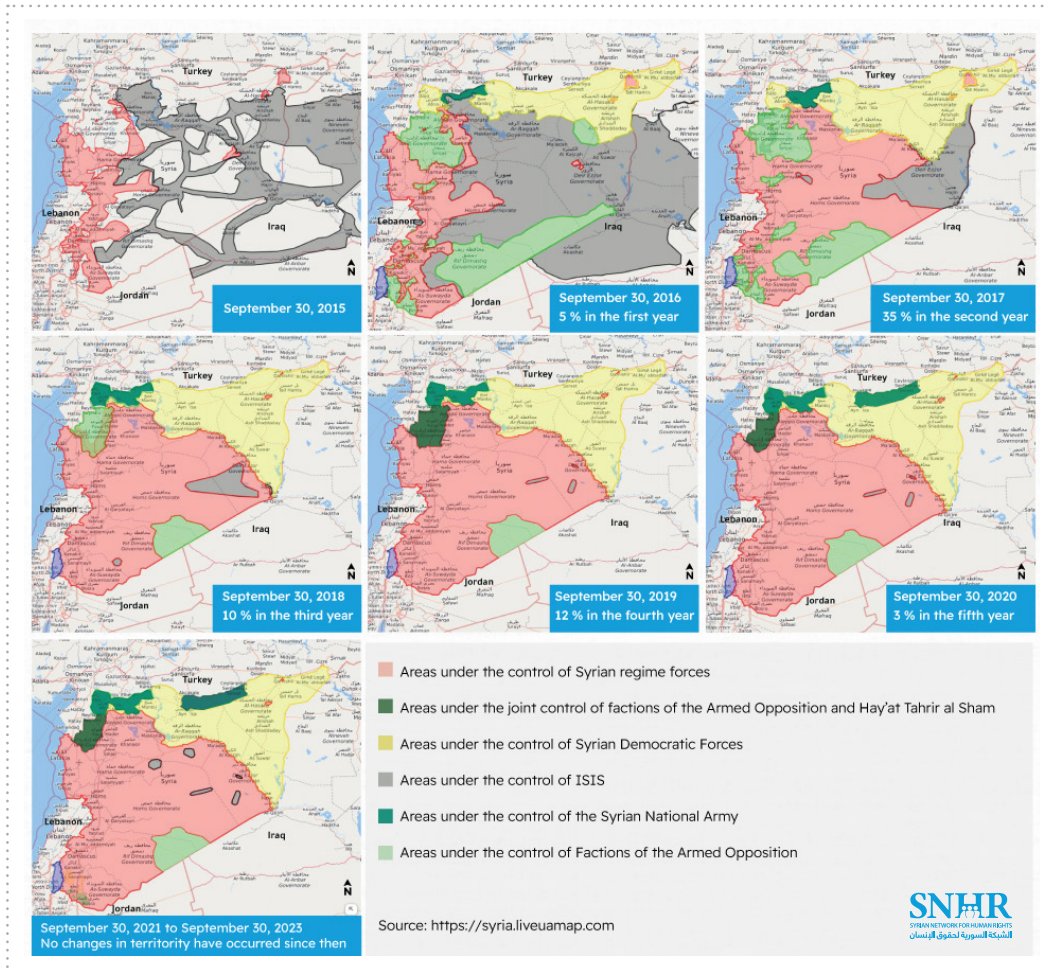


Russia's invaluable support for the regime has not been limited to providing a shield at the Security Council through its veto powers. For the regime, Moscow's most crucial form of support was throwing the regime itself a military lifeline through its intervention [officially launched](#) on September 30, 2015.

At the time of its initial intervention, the Syrian regime was crumbling on multiple levels under an international blockade which was brought about by the crimes the regime committed in Syria. That is when Russia directly intervened by widely bombarding many areas in Syrian territory. The Russian intervention was not limited to any temporal or spatial confines, but rather was an open intervention blessed by the Syrian regime. In exchange for guarantees given to Russia about asserting its presence and military bases in the region, Russia had to ensure that the Syrian regime remains in power and to block any chance of a political path that could ultimately lead to Syria becoming a democratic pluralist regime.

The inescapable truth that no one can deny is that Russia's military formal and direct intervention was supporting the Syrian regime's bloodthirsty logic according to which the regime approached the popular uprising. This is best evidenced by the fact that Russia directly bombarded the different areas whose residents openly opposed the Syrian regime. With Russia backing, the regime was able to turn a blind eye to any promises it made for reform and gave the regime breathing space to escape the mounting international pressure at the time. In short, thanks to Russia's backing, the Syrian regime no longer had to concern itself with any prospect of needing to follow the course of any political path to bring about democratic change. This certainty on the regime's part can be seen from its dismissive attitude after that point towards the negotiation process with the political opposition. On the ground, the Syrian regime was able to take back control of vast areas it had previously lost control over after destroying them almost completely. The graph below shows the changes to the areas under the Syrian regime's control and its recapture of territory after 2015.

Changes to the areas under the Syrian regime's control by year since Russia launched its military intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015



As these maps show, the Syrian regime enjoyed massive, direct gains thanks to Russia's military intervention. A compelling argument can be made that Russia's intervention was the turning point for the Syrian regime's control of territory on the ground. After only having control of a small fraction of Syrian territory prior to 2015, the regime managed to take back control of most of the country following the intervention.

Even though Russia's aerial, technical, and logistic support has proved crucial for the regime, it has not been limited to those arenas, with Moscow providing support for the regime on virtually all fronts. This includes denying or justifying the regime's use of chemical weapons, questioning the authenticity of the reports by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), exploiting cross-border humanitarian assistance (on this point in particular, SNHR has released [three extensive reports](#)), and harnessing its media capabilities to spread pro-regime propaganda and polish the regime's blood-drenched image.

To document the human and material losses caused by Russia in Syria, SNHR releases an annual report outlining these losses. In this, SNHR aims to expose and call attention to the crimes caused by the Russian intervention and to the many violations of international human rights law taking place because of the Russian military intervention.

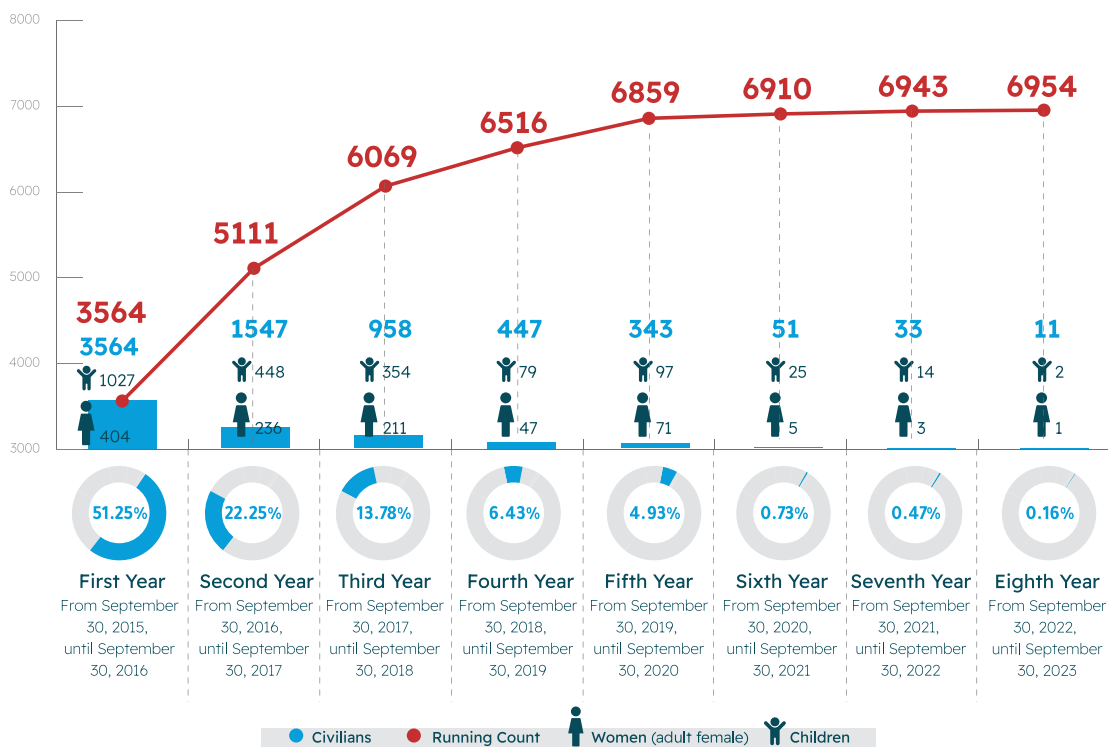
Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR Executive Director, says:

Every year, we reiterate our human rights position, namely that Russia's intervention in Syria is unlawful because it is based on a request by an illegitimate regime that claimed power through fire and iron, rather than through a constitution and legitimate elections. In addition to this, Russian forces chose to intervene in support of a regime that was and is engaged in perpetrating crimes against humanity, before even mentioning the war crimes and crimes against humanity which Russia itself has committed in Syria. All these facts render Russia's presence in Syria unlawful. Russia must pay restitution to the families of the victim it has killed and rebuild the vital facilities and homes it has destroyed.

III. Breakdown of the Most Notable Violations Perpetrated by Russian Forces Since the Launch of Russia's Military Intervention Since September 2015, up Until September 2023, According to SNHR's Database

A. Civilian deaths

SNHR has documented the killing of 6,954 civilians, including 2,046 children and 978 women (adult female) at the hands of Russian force since the launch of Russia's military intervention up until September 30, 2023.

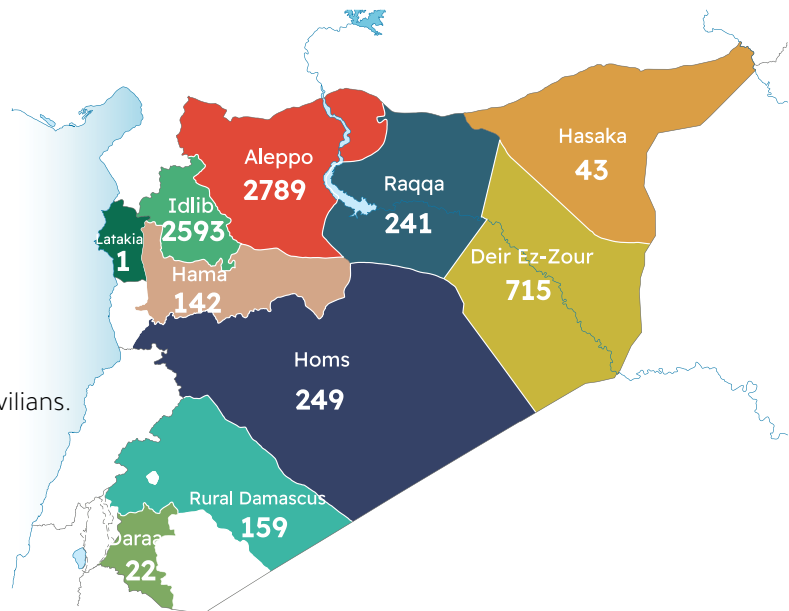


Civilian deaths at the hands of Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

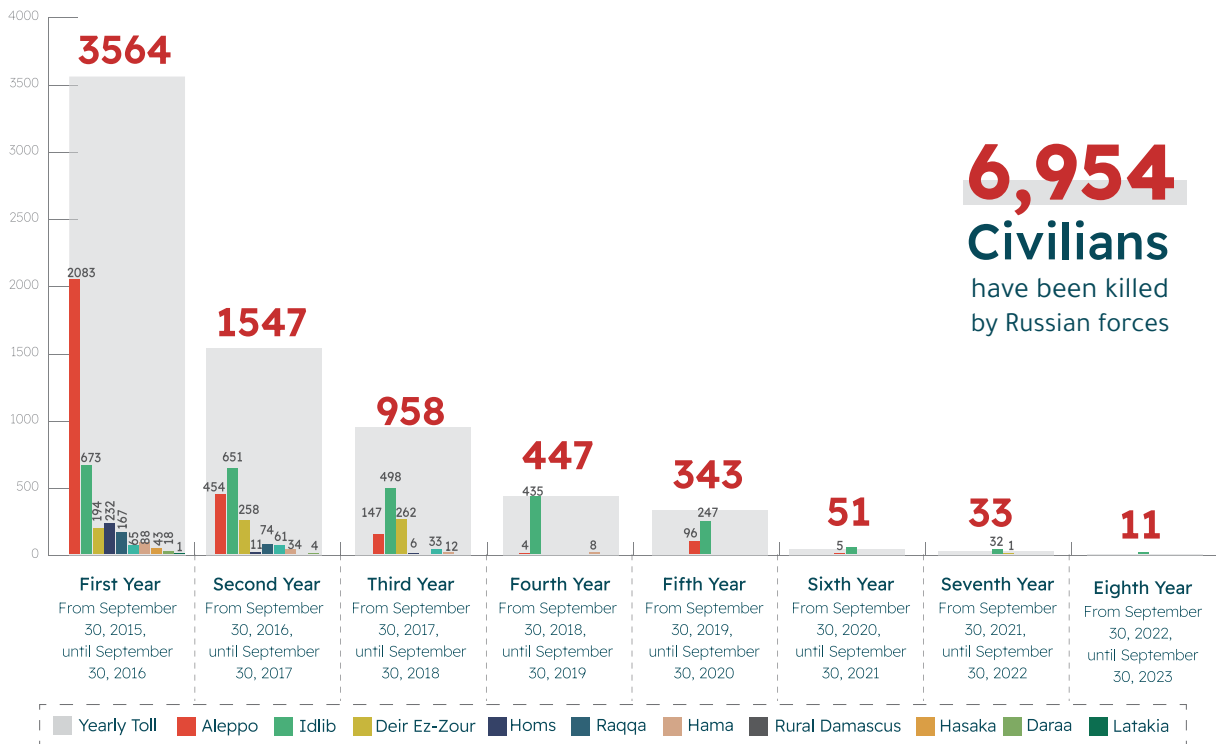
- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 3,564 civilians, including 1,027 children and 404 women.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 3,564 civilians, including 448 children and 236 women.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): 958 civilians, including 354 children and 211 women.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): 447 civilians, including 79 children and 47 women.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): 343 civilians, including 97 children and 71 women.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): 51 civilians, including 25 children and five women.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): 33 civilians, including 14 children and three women.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): 11 civilians, including two children and one woman.

Civilian deaths at the hands of Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:

- **Aleppo:** 2,789 civilians.
- **Idlib:** 2,593 civilians.
- **Deir Ez-Zour:** 715 civilians.
- **Homs:** 249 civilians.
- **Raqqa:** 241 civilians.
- **Hama:** 142 civilians.
- **Rural Damascus 'Rif Dimshaq':** 159 civilians.
- **Hasaka:** 43 civilians.
- **Daraa:** 22 civilians.
- **Latakia:** 1 civilian.



Civilian deaths at the hands of Russian forces are distributed by year across governorates as follows:



As the graph shows, about 44 percent of all victims killed by Russian forces are children and women, an exceptionally high percentage which further confirms that most Russian operations have targeted civilian residents. The graph also shows that the first year of Russia's intervention saw 52 percent of the deaths of all victims killed by Russia to date. In terms of documenting deaths according to the governorate where they took place, Aleppo saw the highest percentage of victims killed by Russia, accounting for approximately 41 percent of the total, followed by Idlib with approximately 38 percent.

B. Massacres

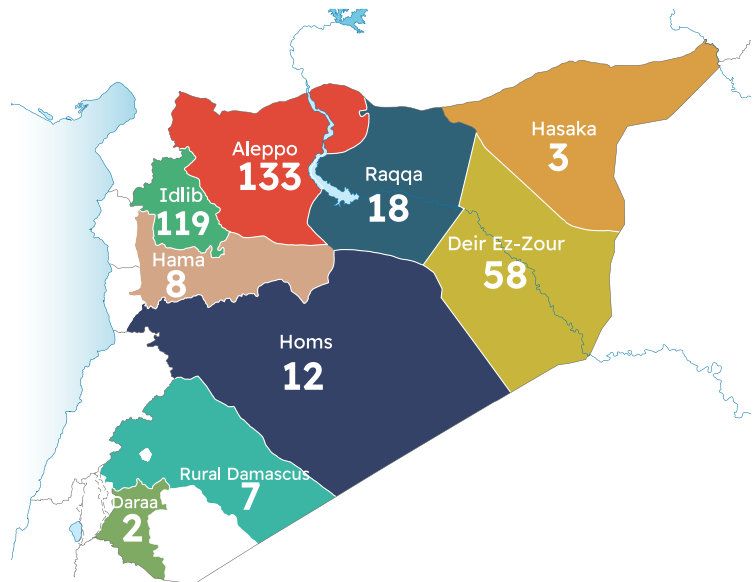
SNHR has documented no fewer than 360 massacres by Russian forces since the launch of Russia's military intervention in Syria, up until September 30, 2023.

Massacres committed by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

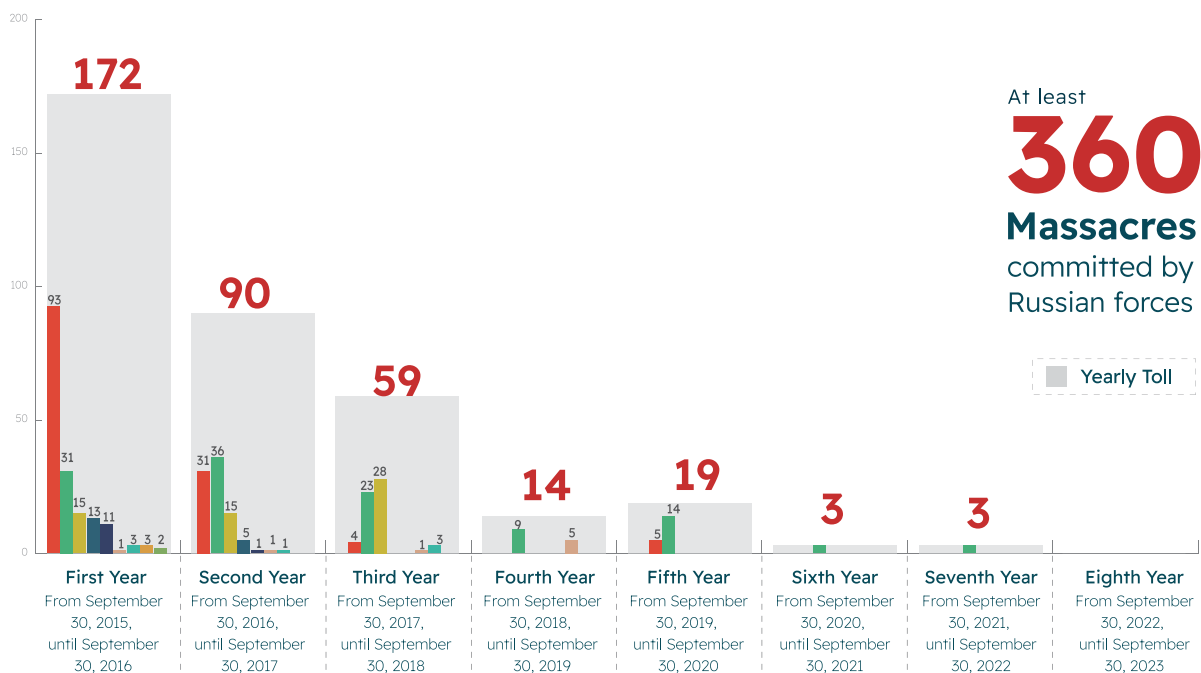
- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 172 massacres.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 90 massacres.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): 59 massacres.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): 14 massacres.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): 19 massacres.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): Three massacres.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): Three massacres.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): We recorded no massacres by Russian forces in the intervention's eighth year.

Massacres by Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:

- **Aleppo:** 133 massacres.
- **Idlib:** 119 massacres.
- **Deir Ez-Zour:** 58 massacres.
- **Homs:** 12 massacres.
- **Raqqa:** 18 massacres.
- **Hama:** Eight massacres.
- **Rural Damascus:** Seven massacres.
- **Hasaka:** Three massacres.
- **Daraa:** Two massacres.



Massacres committed by Russian forces are distributed by year across governorates as follows:



Analysis of the data available on SNHR's database documenting the massacres committed by Russian forces since the launch of their military intervention in 2015 shows that the first three years saw the highest numbers of massacres, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the total (48 percent, 25 percent, and 17 percent in the first, second, and third year respectively). By governorate, Aleppo saw the highest number of massacres, followed by Idlib, then Deir Ez-Zour. This can be explained mainly by Russia's plan to aid the Syrian regime to restore control of the vast areas it lost in the early years of the popular uprising for democracy (2011-2015)

C. Victims among medical personnel

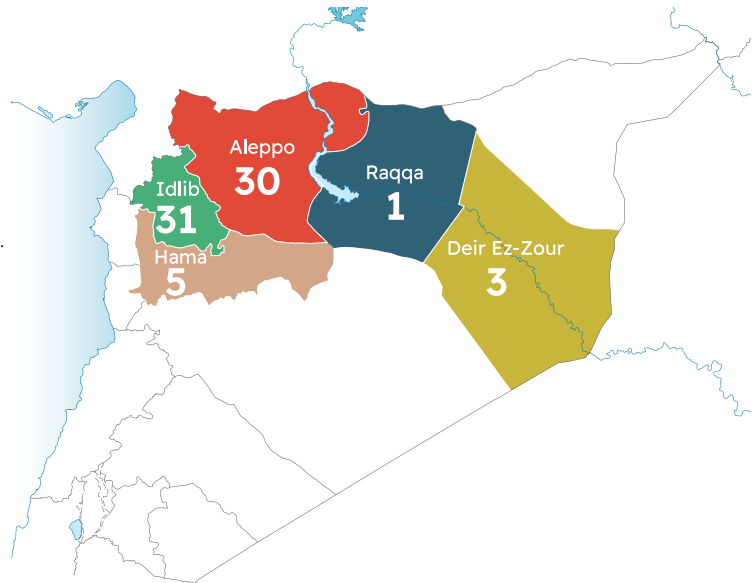
We have documented the killing of 70 medical personnel, including 12 women (adult female), at the hands of Russian forces since the launch of its military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2023.

Medical personnel killed by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

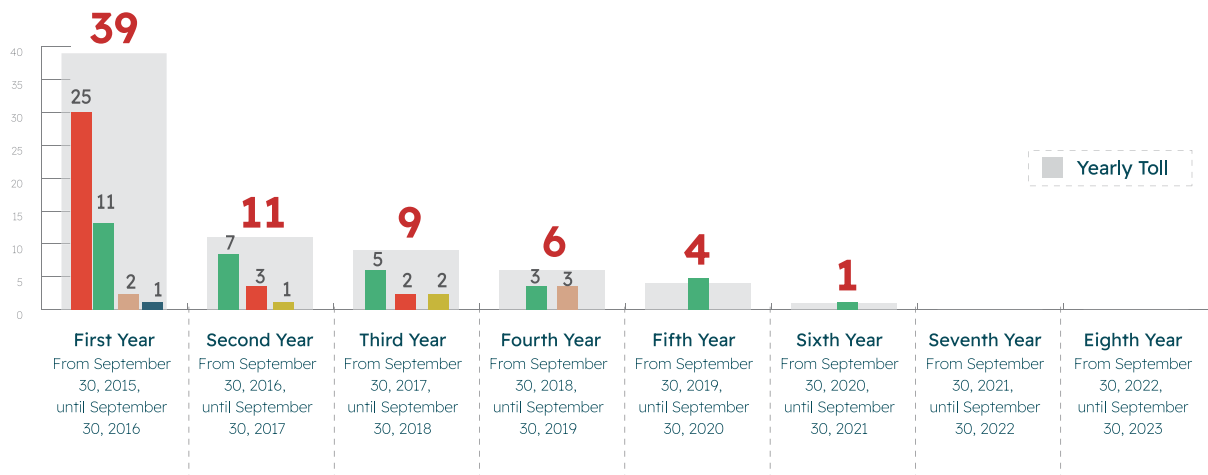
- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 39 medical personnel, including seven women.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 11 medical personnel, including two women.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): Nine medical personnel, including three women.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): Six medical personnel.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): Four medical personnel.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): One medical personnel.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): We recorded no deaths among medical personnel at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's seventh year.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): We recorded no deaths among medical personnel at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's eighth year.

Medical personnel killed by Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:

- Aleppo: 30 medical personnel.
- Idlib: 31 medical personnel.
- Deir Ez-Zour: Three medical personnel.
- Raqqa: One medical personnel.
- Hama: Five medical personnel



Medical personnel killed by Russian forces are distributed by year across governorates as follows:



As shown on the graph, Russia has played a key role in the increasingly dire medical situation in the county by killing medical personnel and driving hundreds others to flee in fear of being killed. The first year of Russia's military intervention saw the highest number of victims among medical personnel killed by Russian forces with 39 victims, most of whom were killed in Aleppo governorate (25 victims) followed by Idlib (11 victims).

D. Victims among Civil Defense (White Helmets) personnel

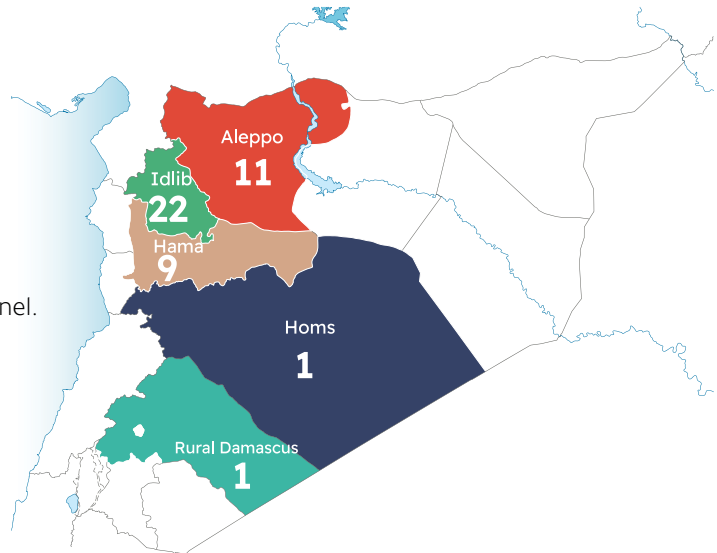
We documented the killing of 44 Civil Defense (White Helmets) personnel at the hands of Russian forces since the launch of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2023.

Civil Defense personnel killed by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

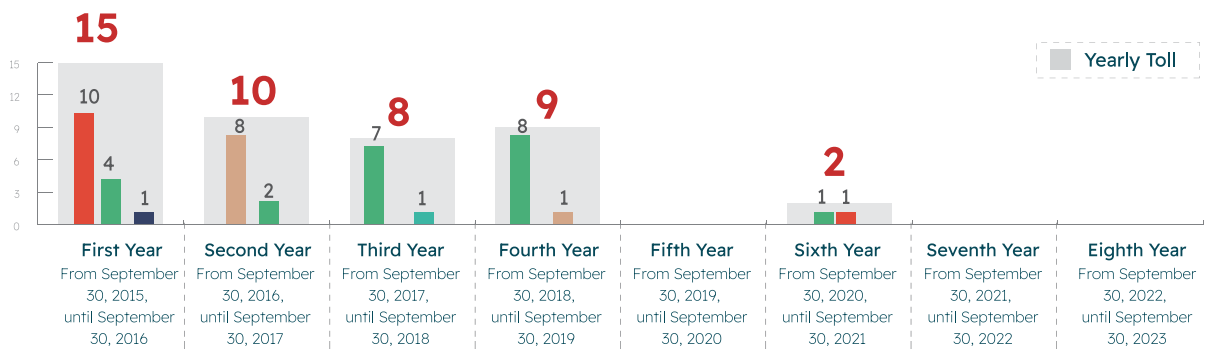
- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 15 Civil Defense personnel.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 10 Civil Defense personnel.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): Eight Civil Defense personnel.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): Nine Civil Defense personnel.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): We recorded no deaths among Civil Defense personnel at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's fifth year.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): Two Civil Defense personnel.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): We recorded no deaths among Civil Defense personnel at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's seventh year.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): We recorded no deaths among Civil Defense personnel at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's eighth year.

Civil Defense personnel killed by Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:

- **Idlib:** 22 civil defense personnel.
- **Aleppo:** 11 civil defense personnel.
- **Hama:** Nine civil defense personnel.
- **Homs:** One civil defense personnel.
- **Rural Damascus:** One civil defense personnel.



Civil Defense personnel killed by Russian forces are distributed by year across governorates as follows:



As these figures show, Russian forces have deliberately targeted the Syrian Civil Defense systems and personnel in Syria, whether by targeting the group's centers or through its 'double-tap' strategy, which led to more casualties, especially among Civil Defense personnel and medics. According to the graph, the first year saw the most deaths among Civil Defense personnel at the hands of Russia (15 victims, accounting for approximately 35 percent of the total), followed by the second year (10 victims, accounting for approximately 23 percent of the total). Most victims were killed in Idlib which accounted for 50 percent of the total, specifically in the intervention's third and fourth year, followed by Aleppo governorate with 25 percent of the total, with most victims in the governorate being killed in the first year.

E. Victims among media workers

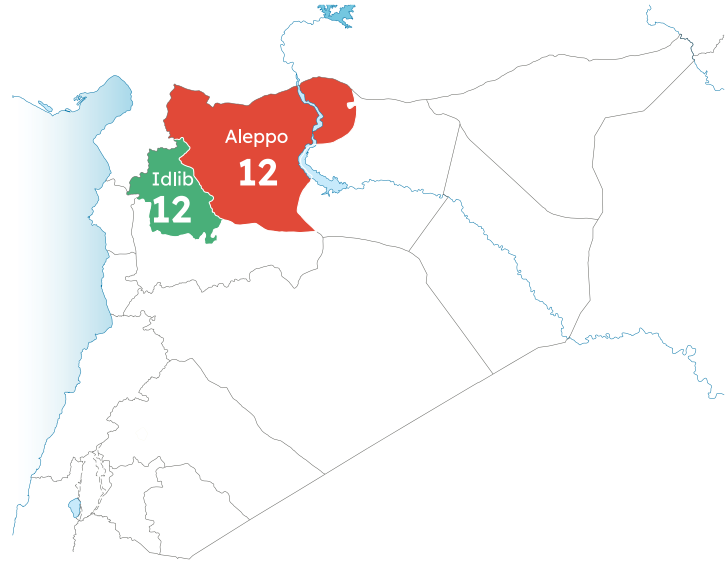
SNHR has documented the killing of 24 media workers at the hands of Russian forces since the launch of Russia's military intervention in Syria up until September 30, 2023.

Media workers killed by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

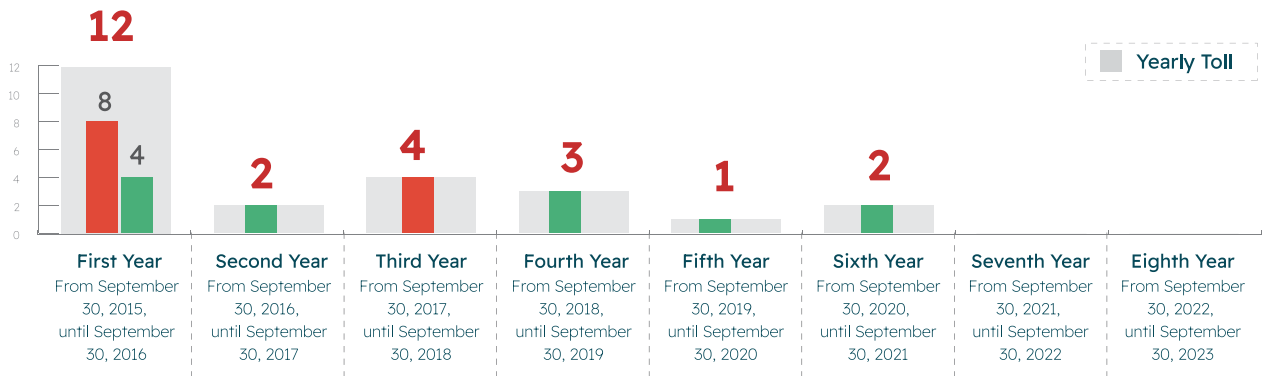
- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 12 media workers.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): Two media workers.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): Four media workers.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): Three media workers.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): One media worker.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): Two media workers.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): We recorded no deaths among media workers at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's seventh year.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): We recorded no deaths among media workers at the hands of Russian forces in the intervention's eighth year.

Media workers killed by Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:

- **Aleppo:** 12 media workers.
- **Idlib:** 12 media workers.



Media workers killed by Russian forces are distributed by year across governorates as follows:



As these figures show, Russian forces have targeted media workers most intensively in the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib with the death toll being split evenly between the two governorate. The first year saw the deaths of 50 percent of all the media workers killed by Russian forces to date, followed by the third year with four, accounting for approximately 17 percent of the overall death toll.

F. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

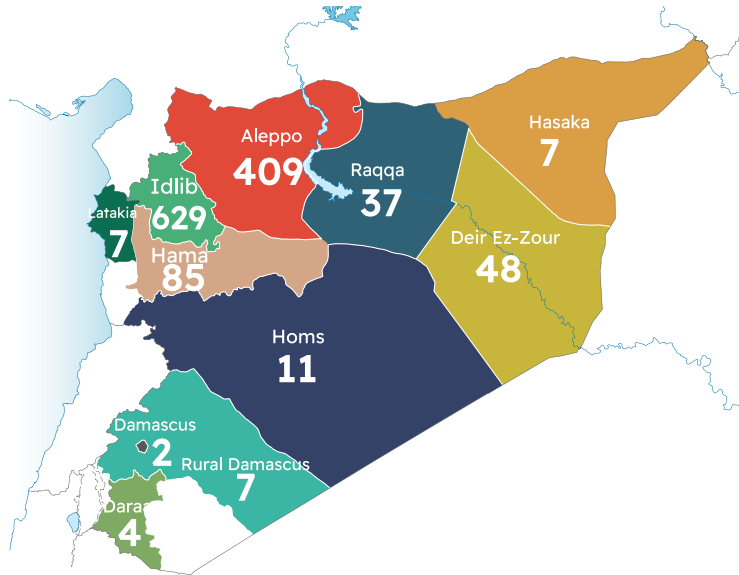
We documented no fewer than 1,246 attacks on vital civilian facilities; including 223 schools, 207 medical facilities, and 61 markets, at the hands of Russian forces since the launch of Russia's military intervention up until September 30, 2023.

Attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

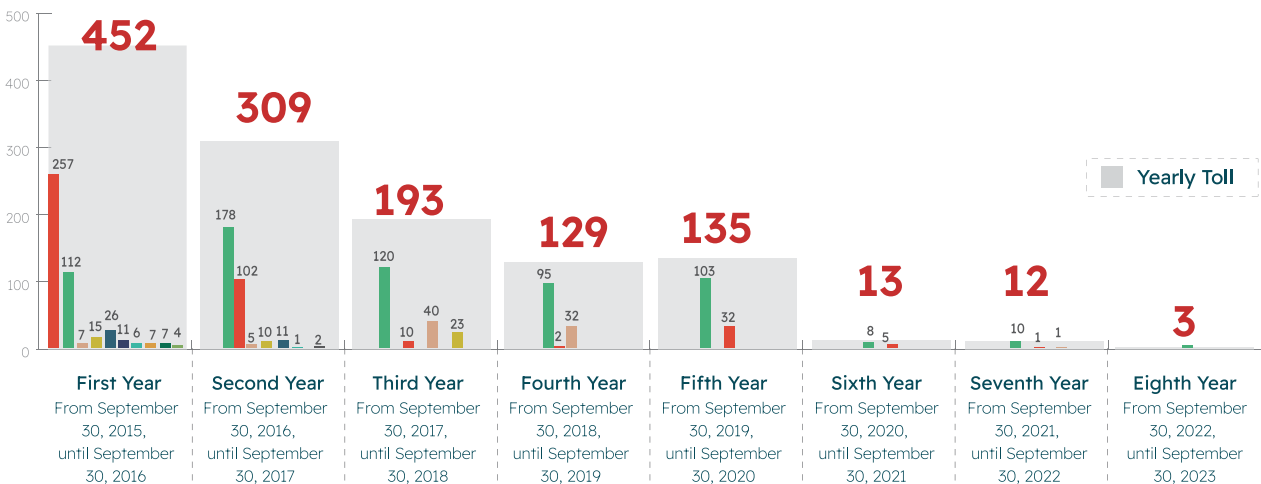
- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 452, including 74 schools, 77 medical facilities, and 35 markets.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 309, including 65 schools, 54 medical facilities, and 12 markets.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): 193, including 37 schools, 35 medical facilities, and eight markets.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): 129, including 25 schools, 24 medical facilities, and one market.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): 135, including 21 schools, 17 medical facilities, and two markets.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): 13, including two markets.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): 12, including one school.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): Three, including one market.

Attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:

- **Aleppo:** 409 attacks.
- **Idlib:** 629 attacks.
- **Hama:** 85 attacks.
- **Deir Ez-Zour:** 48 attacks.
- **Raqqqa:** 37 attacks.
- **Homs:** 11 attacks.
- **Hasaka:** Seven attacks.
- **Latakia:** Seven attacks.
- **Rural Damascus:** Seven attacks.
- **Daraa:** Four attacks.
- **Damascus:** Two attacks.



Attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces are distributed across governorates as follows:



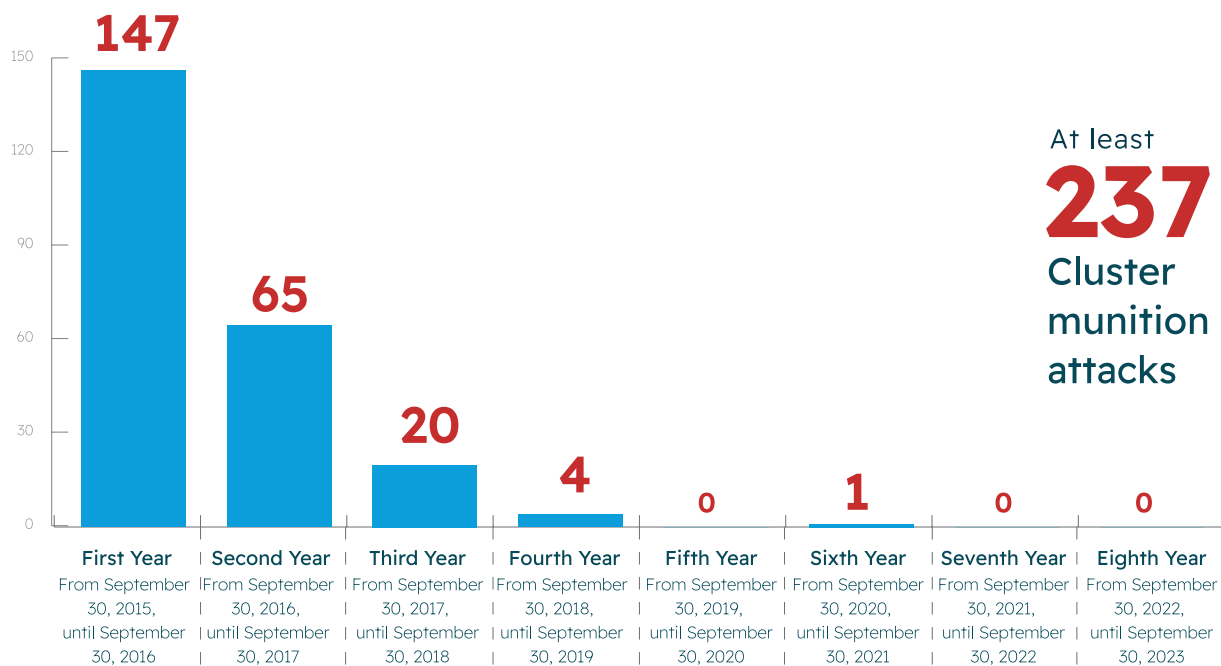
As the graph shows, the first year of Russia's intervention saw 452 attacks on vital civilian facilities, the highest number in one year, which accounted for approximately 37 percent of all such attacks to date. The numbers decreased as the years went by, with three attacks documented in the eighth year, accounting for about one percent of all attacks. Meanwhile, Idlib saw the highest number of attacks, 629 in all, accounting for approximately 51 percent of the total, with this high number due to Idlib and its vicinity remaining free of the regime's control for all these years, and thus being subjected to more attacks. While the number of attacks on vital civilian facilities fell to three so far this year, this still means that Russia continues to breach the ceasefire agreement signed with Türkiye on March 5, 2020, which shows that Russia has disregarded this agreement, along with other many agreements and laws.

G. Use of cluster munitions

SNHR has documented no fewer than 237 attacks using cluster munitions by Russian forces since the launch of their military intervention up until September 30, 2023.

Attacks involving the use of cluster munitions by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 147 attacks.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 65 attacks.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): 20 attacks.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): Four attacks.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): No attacks involving the use of cluster munitions were recorded in the intervention's fifth year.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): One attack.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): No attacks involving the use of cluster munitions were recorded in the intervention's seventh year.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): No attacks involving the use of cluster munitions were recorded in the intervention's eighth year.



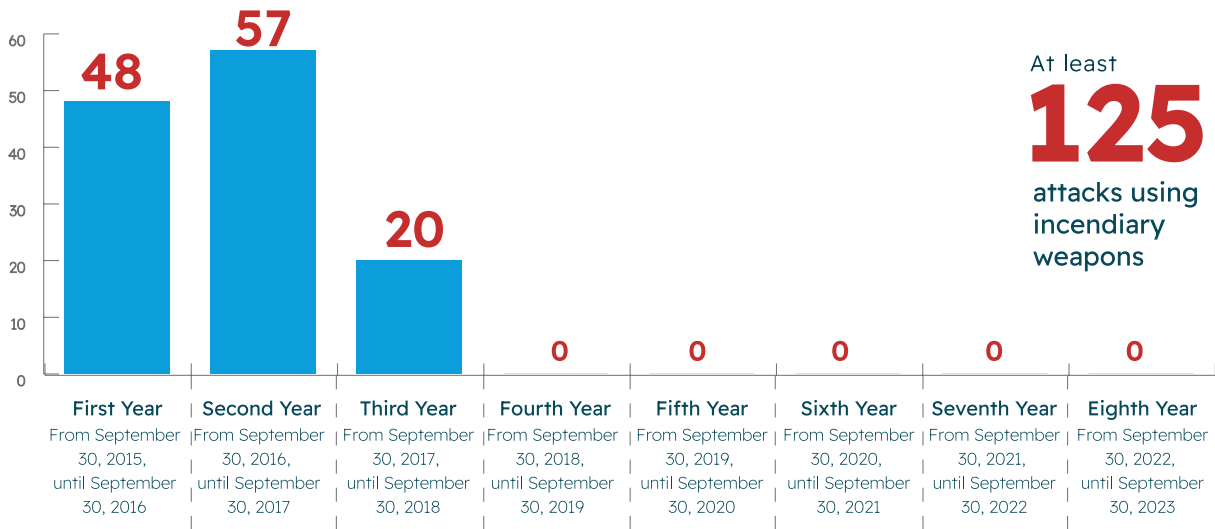
As the figures above show, Russia's use of cluster munitions was at its height in the first years of its intervention. The first year alone recorded 62 percent of all cluster munition attacks carried out by Russian forces to date, followed by the second year, which accounted for approximately 28 percent of the total number of cluster munitions attacks.

H. Use of incendiary weapons

SNHR has documented no fewer than 125 attacks using incendiary weapons by Russian forces since the launch of their military intervention up until September 30, 2023.

Attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons by Russian forces are distributed by year as follows:

- **First year** (From September 30, 2015, until September 30, 2016): 48 attacks.
- **Second year** (From September 30, 2016, until September 30, 2017): 57 attacks.
- **Third year** (From September 30, 2017, until September 30, 2018): 20 attacks.
- **Fourth year** (From September 30, 2018, until September 30, 2019): No attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons were recorded in the intervention's fourth year.
- **Fifth year** (From September 30, 2019, until September 30, 2020): No attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons were recorded in the intervention's fifth year.
- **Sixth year** (From September 30, 2020, until September 30, 2021): No attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons were recorded in the intervention's sixth year.
- **Seventh year** (From September 30, 2021, until September 30, 2022): No attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons were recorded in the intervention's seventh year.
- **Eighth year** (From September 30, 2022, until September 30, 2023): No attacks involving the use of incendiary weapons were recorded in the intervention's eighth year.



According to the attacks we have documented, Russian forces only used incendiary weapon in the first three years of Russia's intervention. Most of these attacks took place in the second year (approximately 46 percent of all attacks), followed by the first year (approximately 39 of all attacks).

I. Forced displacement

The ferocious level of violence shown in Russia's attacks has played a major role in displacement movements, with Russian attacks, in parallel with those of the Syrian-Iranian alliance, leading to the displacement of approximately 4.8 million people, most of whom have been displaced more than once.

4.8 Million people

most of whom were displaced more than once



Picture of IDPs in Murin IDPs Camp in Murin village, western rural Idlib, packing their luggage to flee the camp after it was targeted with cluster-munition loaded missiles that originated from a site where regime forces are stationed- November 6, 2022 ©SNHR

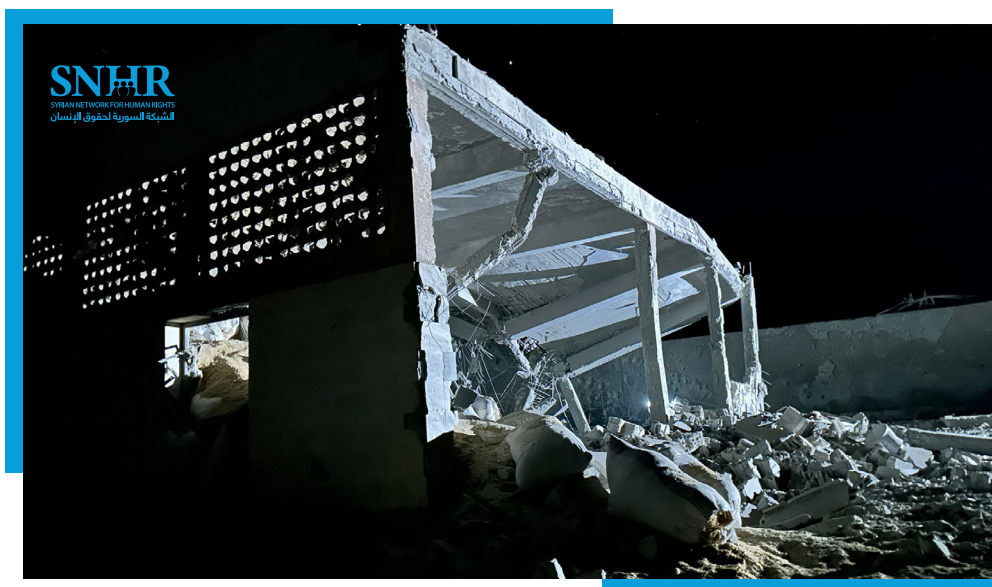
IV. Some of the Incidents Documented in the Past Year on SNHR's Database

A. Extrajudicial killings by Russian forces in the intervention's eighth year

On Saturday, June 24, 2023, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian carried out four consecutive airstrikes, targeting Basbat village in western rural Idlib governorate. The missiles hit houses and agricultural land around the village while farmworkers were harvesting wheat there, [killing two civilian siblings](#), and injuring two others, as well as completely destroying a number of houses. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, August 5, 2023, at around 11:00 local time, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian carried out two airstrikes, firing four missiles in total, at the road connecting Idlib city and Ein Sheib village in western rural Idlib governorate. The missiles hit [a multi-story building located in a farm, killing three civilians \(a man, his wife, and his son\), and wounding other civilians](#), as well as completely destroying the building. After Civil Defense rescue teams arrived at the site to carry out rescue and aid operations, the same warplanes carried out two more airstrikes, firing four missiles that landed about 200 meters from the farm targeted in the original attack, [slightly wounding the leader](#) of the humanitarian Violet Organization's aid team in Idlib. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, August 22, 2023, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian fired multiple missiles at an IDP shelter on the outskirts of Arsi Shamal village to the west of Ein Sheib village in Sahl al-Rouj in western rural Idlib governorate, [killing two civilians](#), one of them a child, and injuring five others. [The shelter building itself was partially destroyed in the attack](#), which also killed a number of livestock owned by the IDPs. It should be noted that the shelter formerly housed the [Ein Sheib Water Station](#), which was repurposed as a shelter for about 15 internally displaced families after being put out of commission previously. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) at the time of the incident.



Destruction following a Russian airstrike on an IDPs shelter on the outskirts of Arsi village in Idlib
- August 22, 2023 ©SNHR

B. Attacks on vital civilian facilities by Russian forces in the intervention's eighth year

On Tuesday, October 11, 2022, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian fired missiles at a poultry farm in al-Shakhib village, located near al-Z'aneya town in western rural Idlib governorate. [Hundreds of birds died in the attack, which heavily destroyed the farm.](#) The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) at the time of the incident.



*Destruction following a Russian airstrike on a poultry farm in al-Shakhib village in Idlib
- October 11, 2022*

On Sunday, June 25, 2023, at 10:08 local time, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian fired two missiles [at a popular vegetable market](#) (known locally as the Bandoura Souq, or the Tomato Market), on the eastern outskirts of Jisr al-Shogohur city in western rural Idlib governorate. The airstrike took place at a time when the market was heavily crowded with shoppers, resulting in the [deaths of three civilians, as well as damaging the market's facilities.](#)

It should be noted that the market, which is used to sell crops grown around Sahl al-Ghab and Sahl al-Rouj, was only recently established in a square belonging to the local sugar factory, which was destroyed in earlier military operations in Jisr al-Shoghour city.

The same Russian airstrike on the market also resulted in some destruction to the perimeter fence and school building of the adjacent vocational high school, which was being used by the Turkistani Islamic Party as a military headquarters. The attack also resulted in the deaths of a number of fighters from the faction. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) at the time of the incident.



Damage to the vegetables market in eastern Jisr al-Shoghour city in rural Idlib following a Russian airstrike that resulted in casualties - June 25, 2023 | Photo credit: Abdullah Saed ©SNHR

Despite all the attacks outlined above, which targeted locations populated by civilians, and despite the catastrophic consequences of these attacks on Syrian society, Russian authorities continue to this day to deny carrying out any attacks against civilians. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, repeatedly claims that Russia's intervention is lawful because it took place at the request of the Syrian regime and supposedly for the purpose of combating ISIS. Mr. Lavrov asserts that his country's government is complying with the rules of international humanitarian law, while apparently completely ignoring the fact that Russia has never launched even one investigation into the confirmed information of Russian involvement in numerous violations, through its attacks, which qualify as war crimes according to many UN reports, as well as international and local reports, by many reputable outlets and organizations, such as the [New York Times](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and [Amnesty International](#), in addition to SNHR's periodic reports.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

1. The Russian regime has long been involved in supporting the Syrian regime, which has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, by providing political support in different international circles, and by providing the regime with weapons and military expertise. The direct military intervention on the side of the regime since 2015 is a stark manifestation of this support. Such support to a regime involved in crimes against humanity constitutes a clear violation of international law and makes the Russian regime subject to accountability.
2. The Russian military intervention in Syria is wholly unlawful, despite taking place at the Syrian regime's request, because the Syrian regime seized power in Syria in an illegitimate manner through elections that took place under the grip of the security apparatus.
3. The Russian military intervention has been used to prolong and perpetuate the Syrian regime's violations against the Syrian people, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. Thus, Russia's military intervention is a violation of international law and even a form of direct involvement in the war crimes perpetrated.
4. Russia has used its UN veto 14 times since its direct military intervention was launched, despite becoming a party to the Syrian conflict. This is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Those vetoes have been employed by the Syrian regime to provide impunity for its crimes giving it a sense of absolute immunity from any prosecution. Such use of the UN veto is arbitrary and fundamentally contradicts human rights law.
5. The Russian authorities have failed to launch any serious investigations into any of the attacks carried out by their forces included in this report or in any previous reports. The Russian leadership, both military and political, bear responsibility for those attacks, based on the principle of command responsibility under International Humanitarian Law,¹ since they did not prevent the attacks, nor did they punish those responsible. Rather, the widespread and repeated nature of the attacks indicates that they can only be a state policy authorized from the very top of the Russian leadership hierarchy, which means that these leadership officials are involved in and should be held accountable for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Therefore, sanctions should be imposed by the world's countries targeting all those involved in these barbaric attacks.
6. The Russian regime has categorically violated UN Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 which provide for the cessation of indiscriminate attacks. It has also violated Article 8 of the Rome Statute by committing the crime of intentional murder, which constitutes a war crime.
7. We affirm that the incidents of bombardment cited in this report targeted unarmed civilians, which means that the Russian forces have violated the provisions of International Human Rights Law which protects the right to life. In addition, this bombardment has been carried out extensively in a non-international armed conflict and as a widespread attack in many cases, which amount to war crimes, as these attacks meet all the relevant criteria.
8. Russia has hindered the political process and both caused and steadily worsened a horrific humanitarian crisis for millions of IDPs by preventing the free movement of UN cross-border humanitarian assistance. It has also participated with the Syrian regime in displacing the vast majority of IDPs.

1. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Rule 152 of the international humanitarian law <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule152>
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Rule 153 of the international humanitarian law <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule153>

Recommendations

UN Security Council

- The use of a UN veto in the case of a state involved in a conflict should not be allowed. Russia is directly involved in the Syrian conflict and is using its UN veto for its own and the regime's benefit, although both are parties to this armed conflict.
- Take further measures following the adoption of UNSCR 2254, which clearly demands that all parties "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."
- Refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court and hold all those involved accountable, including the Russian regime whose involvement in perpetrating war crimes has been proven beyond any doubt.
- Seriously seek to fulfil a political transition towards democratic government in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué and UNSCR 2254.
- Impose UN economic and military sanctions on the Syrian and Iranian regimes which have been and are still directly involved in perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people.

International Community

- In light of the Security Council's division and complete paralysis, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people, increase support for relief efforts, and endeavor to employ universal jurisdiction for those crimes within national courts in fair trials to hold all perpetrators to account.
- Support the political transition process and put pressure on the parties to oblige them to implement the political transition within no more than six months so that most violations stop, and millions of displaced people can make a safe and stable return to their original homes.
- In light of Russia's continued use of the UN veto, despite the ongoing perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Syrian regime, it is imperative that the international community form an international civilized alliance outside the UN Security Council with the aim of protecting civilians in Syria from attacks conducted by Russia and the Syrian regime.
- Impose economic sanctions against the Russian regime for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria, for continuing to violate the 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, similar to the sanctions imposed on Russia over its illegal intervention in Ukraine.

- As a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the principle of 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P), in dozens of studies and reports. After exhausting the previous political steps, from the Arab League, then Kofi Annan's plan and all the following statements calling for the cessation of hostilities and Astana agreements and after the passage of so much time, action should be taken under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to implement the 'Responsibility to Protect' principle, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly. Despite this, however, the UN Security Council is still obstructing the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Put pressure again on the UN Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Seek to transfer the subject of addressing the Syrian issue to the UN General Assembly.
- Unequivocally condemn the violations of the Russian regime and compel it to bear its legal and material responsibility for the reconstruction of vital buildings and facilities in Syria that were destroyed in bombardment by Russian forces. Compel the Russian regime to compensate all victims affected by Russian violations.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Conduct extensive investigations into the incidents included in this report and clearly hold Russian forces responsible if sufficient evidence is found of their involvement.

UN Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR)

- Issue a statement condemning the violations perpetrated by Russian forces in Syria on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of Russia's military intervention in Syria, clearly pointing out the catastrophic repercussions of this intervention on the Syrian people and state and condemning Russia's use of its UN veto in the Syrian regime's favor.

UN Special Envoy to Syria

- Call for rapid implementation of a democratic political transition process that restores victims' rights and reflects the principles of transitional justice, without limiting this to the moribund political solution in the ineffectual constitutional committee.

Russian Regime

- Put an end to support for 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 hereditary ruling family and brutal security apparatuses, with such a transition constituting the only way to achieve security, stability and reconstruction for the country.
- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make their findings available to the Syrian public and hold the perpetrators accountable.
- Provide compensation for, reconstruct and reequip all damaged centers and facilities, and compensate the families of all victims killed and all survivors wounded in attacks by the current Russian regime.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects and civilian areas and uphold customary humanitarian law.
- Rebuild and restore residential buildings and shops destroyed by Russian military forces and compensate victims for the entire duration of their displacement.

European States and the European Union

- Impose economic sanctions on Russia for the crimes against humanity and war crimes it has perpetrated in Syria.
- Clearly condemn Russia's heinous violations in Syria and allow the application of universal jurisdiction to prosecute it for those violations.
- Support those displaced as a result of Russia's attacks, especially those living in hundreds of camps in northwest Syria and on the Syrian-Turkish borders.

Acknowledgment and Consolation

We wish to extend our most heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, to those we have identified and documented, and to everyone affected. We also wish to express our most sincere gratitude to the local activists and victims' families for their invaluable contributions to this report.



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No justice without accountability

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