

The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in January 2019



Destruction inflicted by a Russian air strike at al Taqwa automatic bakery in al Janoudiya village, Idlib - January 20, 2019 - Local activist

The SNHR released its monthly special report today, which documents the human rights situation in Syria in January, reviewing the most notable human rights violations at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria.

The report reviews the record of civilian victims who were killed by the main parties to the conflict this month, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights indiscriminate attacks and the use of outlawed weapons (cluster munitions, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons) and attacks on civilian objects.

The report includes records of these violations distributed according to each of the main perpetrator parties responsible. Accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks. On some occasions, when we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for specific attacks to one particular party, as in the case of air strikes by Syrian or Russian warplanes, Syrian-Iranian attacks, or attacks by Syrian Democratic Forces and International Coalition

forces, we indicate that responsibility for these attacks is held jointly by the parties in question until we are able to likely establish which one of the parties was responsible, or it's proved that the attack was a joint initiative carried out in coordination between the two parties.

The report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments, and on an extensive network of relations with various sources, in addition to analyzing a large number of photographs and videos.

The report documents the deaths of 197 civilians in January, including 57 children and 27 women (adult female), as well as two medical personnel at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria. It also documents the deaths of 14 individuals who died due to torture, and at least five massacres.

The report also documents at least 567 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 19 children, 31 women (adult female), with the largest number of these carried out by Syrian Regime forces in the governorates of Damascus Suburbs, Aleppo and Damascus.

According to the report, at least 24 attacks on vital civilian facilities were recorded in January, of which one was an attack on a school, four were on medical centers and four others were on places of worship.

The report states that the evidence we gathered indicates that attacks were directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes of extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance. In addition, the indiscriminate attacks they carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.

The report stresses that the Syrian government has violated international humanitarian law and customary law, and a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.

SNHR was unable to find any records of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime, or by Russian or International Coalition forces prior to any attack in accordance with the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising in 2011, providing further blatant evidence of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.

According to the report, Islamist extremist groups as well as factions of the Armed Opposition, also carried out extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and torture, as well as indiscriminate shelling that caused destruction of vital civilian facilities. The report adds that the indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the alliance of 'International Coalition forces and Syrian Democratic Forces are considered a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.

The report calls on the UN Security Council to take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, and stresses the importance of referring the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court, adding that all those who are responsible should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been repeatedly proven.

The report also calls on the Security Council to adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions in Syria, similar to the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and to include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.

The report also requests that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons camps, and to follow up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

The report calls for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' after all political channels have proved fruitless through all agreements, the Cessation of Hostilities statements, and Astana agreements that followed, stressing the need to resort to Chapter VII, and implement the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly.

The report calls on the Commission of Inquiry (COI) and the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports, and confirms the SNHR's willingness to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

The report also calls on the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria to condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements, and to re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, and to empower the Constitutional Commission prior to the establishment of a transitional government.

The report emphasizes that the Russian regime must launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the individuals involved accountable, and demands that the Russian regime, as a guarantor party in Astana talks, should stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of those forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime, and stop using cluster munitions and incendiary weapons.

The report also stresses that the Syrian regime must stop the indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and stop using prohibited munitions and barrel bombs, as well as ending the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention

centers. The report adds that the Syrian Regime must also reveal the fate of 82,000 Syrian citizens previously arrested by the regime's own Security apparatus, whose fate it has concealed to date, and comply with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The report also calls on the International Coalition forces to acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians, and demands that the coalition launch serious investigations, as well as compensating and apologizing to the victims and all those affected.

The report stresses that the states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control, adding that all forms of support, military and all others, should be ended.

The report also calls on the Armed Opposition factions to ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control, and urges them to investigate incidents that have resulted in civilian casualties, as well as calling on them to take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and to cease any indiscriminate attacks.

Lastly, the report stresses the need for international organizations to develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.

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