



Syrian Human Rights Committee

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On human rights in Syria 2013
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INTRODUCTION

When the revolution began in the middle of March 2011, Syria entered an unprecedented stage of violence committed against its civilians by the regime. The number of daily human rights violations has surged, making it difficult for the different human rights organisations to track. The death toll and arbitrary detentions have reached unprecedented numbers.

Syria entered a similar phase in the late 70s that ended with the infamous 1982 Hamah massacre, in which the regime committed a series of serious human rights violations on various levels, some which remain vague and unknown. However, the events taking place in Syria since March 2011 are different in terms of documentation and access to information. Although the Syrian authorities have banned official media channels from entering Syria and working there, thousands of local journalists in several Syrian governorates have been able to intensively document the violations committed by the regime in a manner which other press and human rights organisations have been unable to.

These local journalists were able to take advantage of modern technology, telecommunications and media. For example, more than two million videos about Syria were uploaded in 2011 and 2012 while tens of Facebook pages work 24/7 on publishing these videos; turning them into reliable sources for international media and human rights organisations.

Despite the efforts made by the local journalists alongside local and international human rights activists to immediately and professionally report and document the true size of the daily violations committed in Syria, the international community's response to the on-going war crimes and crimes against humanity has been disappointing so far. In fact, its weak response has been a

contributing factor which has encouraged the Syrian regime to commit more crimes and have them recorded and praised by its spokespeople.

The events which have taken place in Syria during the last two years are considered among the worst and most dangerous violations of human rights; however the UN council has not been able to condemn these crimes due to the stances of Russia and China. Moreover, the USA and Europe have not played any impactful role in ending these crimes due to international politics.

The international community's humble response has led the Syrian people to lose faith in the International Justice System. In their eyes, the significance of the International Humanitarian Law has decreased due to the lack of international and humanitarian support they are receiving and due to the prioritisation of political interests, leading to an increase in the popularity of radical groups.

The fact that some countries have insisted on the regime's impunity and protection from accountability and the fact that some parties are being forced to give compromises in their dealings with the regime, are both setbacks in the international community's steps towards building strong foundations of accountability. These foundations were enhanced in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal court in 2001 but have now weakened as seen in the lack of action towards the violations committed in Syria.

Each chapter of this report, attempts to give an overall description of the violations committed in Syria in 2011 and 2012. However, unlike previous reports, only a general description and some examples will be given due to the inability to track and explain each case of the hundreds of thousands of killings, detentions, tortures and rapes that have occurred.

Most of the violations committed in this period were planned. For example, children were killed while arbitrary detained prisoners were tortured. Cities were besieged and shelled continuously whilst all

means of aid were cut off, leading to the death of civilians in their homes, the death of the injured due to the lack of medical aid and the death of babies due to the lack of milk. At the same time, the Shabiha carried out massacres in the outskirts of these cities and raped and displaced their inhabitants.

The report attempts to differentiate between the crimes committed for research purposes only. However, readers will notice how these crimes overlap in several chapters.

Mass killings

Throughout 2011 and 2012, a large number of massacres targeting civilians were committed in several Syrian cities and villages. The examples mentioned below present the various methods used in killing civilians such as: indiscriminate shelling, selective shelling, close range shooting and the use of white weapons; all clear signs of a planned systematic methodology used to widely target civilians.

From a legal perspective, massacres constitute to crimes against humanity and war crimes, depending on the nature and type of each one. This chapter is dedicated to crimes targeting large numbers of civilians with white weapons and firearms which have led to their immediate death. Other types of killings are mentioned in other chapters below.

As a result of the on-going massacres, a sense of terror and panic has spread amongst civilians and the number of people fleeing the targeted areas and their surroundings has increased. In addition, because most of the massacres committed so far have not even been condemned, Syrians feel that the regime can get away with any of its crimes and that the international community will not take any procedures to stop or prevent it from doing so.

Below are some examples of the massacres committed by the regime. These massacres have not been investigated by the Syrian authorities or dealt with or prevented by the international community.

Talkalakh crossing, 7 May 2011

On 7 May 2011, a Lebanese journalist reported that 13 Syrian workers who worked in Qabrshmoon, a Lebanese town in Alia, were heading towards Idlib through the Talkalakh crossing. They were shot by a Syrian military unit a few kilometres away from the crossing. The source said that they were all dead except for one who was transferred to a hospital.

Tal al-Nasr (Homs)

On Saturday 21 May 2011, members of the security forces and militias opened fire at participants of a funeral procession of civilians killed the previous day, which was heading towards Tal al-Nasr graveyard in Homs. Eighteen people were killed and 16 were injured. The security forces then attacked the participants and detained more than 100 young men and children who were blindfolded and handcuffed before being put on a coach. According to testimonies given to SHRC, the detainees were taken to the Alawite town of al-Abasiyya where they were assaulted by supporters of the regime. They were then taken to a military security branch where they were brutally beaten up.

Jabal al-Zawiya, 21 December 2011

On 21 December 2011, the Syrian military attacked all the villages in Jabal al-Zawiya forcing people to flee to the surrounding valleys and farms. Around one hundred of them were besieged in a rugged area towards the west of Qofaqeen, next to Kafr A'weed. The armed forces showered them with bullets and tank shells for more than five hours. Their corpses were gathered in northern Kafr A'weed where more than 110 corpses were counted in a mosque while another 11 corpses were found in al-Mwazzara Mosque.

Homs, 26 December 2011

On 26 December 2011, Homs and its suburbs were shelled with artillery shells and mortars leading to the destruction of its houses and the death and injury of dozens of civilians especially in Baba Amr, where 38 civilians were killed out of the 70 people who were killed on that bloody day in Homs.

Al-Khalidiya (Homs), 4 February 2012

On 4 February 2012, it was reported that a total of 200 people were killed and 500 others were injured in al-Khalidiya following the Shabiha's attacks and the armed forces' mortar shelling. Many of the

houses there were destroyed and a large number of victims remained under the rubble.

Baba Amr (Homs), 26 February 2012

On 26 February 2012, a number of families fled Baba Amr fearing for their lives. When they reached the security crossing between Abil and the international road, they were held and put on four coaches which they thought were carrying them to safety. On the way, the elderly on the coaches were asked to get off while all 64 young men on the coaches were killed. The women were kidnapped and taken to an unknown destination. Forty seven bodies were found between al-Ghajar and al-Tannoona near al-Madjane while another 17 were found north Sad al-Shandakhia. Sixty one bodies were handed in to the national hospital in Homs, all of which carry signs slaughter.

Karm al-Zaytoon and al-Adawiyya (Homs), 12 March 2012

On 11 March and 12 March 2012, several areas of Karm al-Zaytoon and al-Adawiyya in southern east Homs were shelled heavily with artillery shells and mortars. They were then attacked by the Shabiha who killed 45 people at least, mostly women and children, with knives. They then used petrol to set their bodies on fire and kidnapped a number of civilians, mostly women.

Forty nine bodies were found in Karm al-Zaytoon in Bab al-Sbaa', twenty one of them belonging to women and twenty eight of them to children. Seven more bodies were also found in al-Adwiyya. Most of the bodies were unidentified because they were left mutilated, burned and naked. Several reports mentioned large numbers of rape also occurring in the area.

Al-Houla (north west Homs), 25 May 2012

On 25 May 2012, a group of Shabiha, protected by the Syrian armed forces, committed a massacre in al-Houla where more than 110 people were killed, most of them women and children killed in their homes by white weapons and firearms. The massacre took place

during a visit of international monitors who only managed to arrive to the city 24 hours after the massacre, accompanied by the regime's forces.

Darayya (Rif Dimashq), 28 August 2012

A massacre was committed in Darayya when the 4th Armoured Division led an incursion into the city after besieging it, in which it carried out many field executions. Two hundred and twenty one corpses were found; 122 of them in Salman al-Derani Mosque to which the families fled.

Alfan al-Shamali (Hama suburbs), 2 September 2012

On Sunday, 2 September 2012, the armed forces and the Shabiha carried out a massacre in Alfan al-Shamali, leading to the death of no less than 35 civilians.

Al-Bab (Aleppo suburbs): 3 September 2012

On Monday 3 September 2012, the armed forces carried out a massacre in al-Bab in the suburbs of Aleppo. 44 civilians were killed by four TNT explosive barrels dropped at a building there.

Al-Qusur (Deir Ezzor), 28 September 2012

On 28 September 2012, the armed forces and the Shabiha besieged al-Qusur in Deir Ezzor and detained a number of unarmed young men and boys who were later executed. Around 19 civilians were named among the dead who were killed in various ways such as: stabbing by knives, spears and razors and close range shootings. The armed forces and the Shabiha then burned several homes, especially abandoned homes whose inhabitants fled as a result of the violence.

Al-Qooriya (Deir Ezzor): 9 November 2012

On 9 November 2012, the Syrian Air Force led a strike on a crowded market in al-Qooriya in Deir Ezzor killing 18 civilians, 12 of which were women and 3 of which were children. Dozens of civilians were also injured.

Arbitrary detention and forced disappearance

Arbitrary detention and forced disappearance are considered among the main violations committed by the Syrian regime for the last thirty five years. However, the number of these cases has surged since the beginning of the Syrian revolution on 15 March 2011. The number of detained and missing persons since the start of the revolution till the end of 2012 is estimated at 170.000 people, sixty five thousand of them released after different periods of detention.

Human rights organisations are facing major difficulties in documenting these cases due to their large numbers. In addition, the state of instable security the country is undergoing has led to the spread of many kidnappings and large cases of displacement, making it difficult to track missing people unless their relatives provide clear accounts of their arrests.

Furthermore, other challenges had already existed even before the beginning of the revolution as a result of the multiplicity of the security forces and the lack of legal procedures taken during the arrests. Therefore, tracking detainees and missing persons has become impossible for local and international organisations, especially that gathering information and keeping a track of any violations made in the country is considered a crime within itself. A large number of activists have been detained and killed as a result of intelligence implying that they have been gathering information about the regime or that they have been in contact with local or international human rights organisations.

The armed forces and the security forces have arrested women, children, young people and the elderly. Estimations mention that more than 800 children were detained till the end of 2012 and that 400 women were detained during the same period.

For example, on the first day of the revolution on 15 March 2011, sisters Marwa Hassan al-Ghamyan (17) and Rama Hassan al-

Ghamyan were both detained by the Syrian intelligence while they were participating in a peaceful demonstration in Damascus.

In addition, on 16 March 2011, the Syrian authorities forcefully dispersed a protest held in front of the Ministry of Interior in Marjeh Square. It arrested a large number of civilians, who were protesting and demanding the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience who were not included in the decreed amnesty, while criminal prisoners arrested 10 days before were. A large number of the detainees were women including: Ruba al-Labwani, Laila al-Labwani, Saba Hussain, Sereen Khoori, Nahed Badaweyya, Maymoona Mohammed al-Ammar, Dana al-Jawabre, Wafaa' al-Lahham and Suheir Atasi.

The authorities also detained some of the main chiefs, governors and religious figures of several areas, who were unable to avoid arrest despite their social status. For example, on the 31 July 2011, the Syrian authorities detained sheikh Nawwaf al-Basheer, chief of the Bakkara tribe which is one of the most prominent tribes in the northern governorates. He was detained till 9 October 2011. Sheikh Mohammed al-Sayasne, the imam and preacher of the Omari Mosque in Daraa was put under house arrest in April 2011. He was forced to make a confession on Addounia TV after one of his sons was killed and another threatened.

Detention conditions have worsened compared to previous years as a result of overcrowding to the extent that the regime has resorted to using schools, cinemas and in some cases football stadiums as detention centres. The conditions of the centres are inhumane; they are infested with insects and rodents and carry a horrible stench as a result of the waste, puss and blood of detainees who were tortured in closed rooms with no ventilation.

The food described by released detainees is almost the same everywhere; one meal a day consisting of a dry and sometimes mouldy piece of bread with a tomato or a potato. In addition, the

guards usually humiliated the detainees when they gave them food by urinating in it and forcing them to eat it.

All testimonies given by detainees confirm the fact that the regime is using systematic torture inside its detention centres. The guards used several instrument to brutally beat up the detainees, electrocuted them and targeted sensitive areas of their bodies. They also threatened them (and in some cases actually carried out their threats) to harm and rape their family members, friends or inmates. In some cases, female detainees were raped in front of the other detainees. This report elaborates on this further in the chapter about torture and rape.

Systematic torture

Using torture in Syrian prisons became a regular method after the 8 March 1963 coup. Several reports published throughout the last few decades by local and international human rights organisations have documented cases in which torture and other humiliating and degrading methods have been regularly and systematically used in all security branches and detention centres. Cases of torture have surged in the period covered in this report; all released detainees have stated that they and their inmates were tortured. This is confirmed by the accounts and testimonies given by defectors from regime who witnessed and also took part in torturing and mistreating detainees.

According to testimonies of defectors and released detainees, torture is used as a method to extract confessions from demonstrators about many things such as: the names of the other demonstrators, the names of the organisers of the demonstrations, using and owning arms and confessing to receiving alleged financial support from abroad. In addition, torture is used to force detainees to give televised testimonies broadcasted on official and semi-official TV channels during a “confessions of a terrorist” session. The detainees are forced to confess that they received money from foreign parties in return for taking part in military operations and that they work for certain political and media parties such as Al-Jazeera and Alarabiya which are often mentioned in these recordings. Some political figures and parties are also usually mentioned such as: Saudi prince Bandar bin Sultan, Lebanese politician Saad Hariri, Lebanese writer Okab Sakr, the Jordanian government and the Turkish government, the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and others.

In addition to these testimonies, videos showing acts of torture have surfaced following the revolution. The Shabiha and security forces tend to record themselves whilst torturing detainees for entertainment purposes. These recordings have been uploaded online either by regime supporters or by activists who find different phones following the death of their owners.

These “leaked videos” give an insight to the different types of torture the detainees go through and those involved in it. This type of information has never been available to human rights organisations before.

Since the start of the revolution, hundreds of leaked videos have been uploaded showing the security forces and the Shabiha torturing civilians, soldiers, women and children, and humiliating them by asking them to kiss their boots, to bow to pictures of the president and to declare that he is their god. Some members of the security forces even recorded videos of themselves raping women.

The official authorities have not given any official response to these videos, but the official media has described them as “fabricated” by the opposition. However, the videos clearly show the military ranks of the perpetrators and the methods they use. The distinctive accent used by the Shabiha, which Syrians can easily recognise, can also be heard in them.

The methods used during torture vary, reaching up to 40 methods. The most common of these methods are: brutally beating up the detainees with different instruments, the wheel technique, the ghost technique, the flying carpet technique, electrocution, sexual harassment or threatening to use sexual harassment (whether with the detainees themselves or one of their family members) and humiliation (such as kissing the guard’s shoes, bowing to the president’s picture, declaring the president as a god, insulting the detainee’s religion, etc).

Two hundred and twelve cases of death during torture were recorded in 2011 while 865 were recorded in 2012. However, estimates reveal that the accurate number is much much higher but documenting the exact number may not be possible at this stage as most detentions made do not have legal any basis and cannot be recorded. Therefore a large number of detainees can be categorised under “forcibly disappeared people” whose destinies are unknown.

With regards to cases which have been documented, corpses were handed to the families for burial with signs of severe torture such as scorching, electrocution and the dismemberment of certain body parts. For example, the corpse of Gayyath Matar was handed to his parents on 9 October 2011 after his throat was cut off and put in a plastic bag. Young Hamza al-Khateeb's corpse was handed to his parents on 21 May 2011. He was tortured brutally and his genitals were mutilated.

In many of these cases, the victim's family was forced to sign declarations stating that their family member was murdered by "armed gangs". In return for receiving the corpse, the family was asked not to hold any funerals or to follow up the case of their family member's deaths. The family was also banned from giving any testimonies to other parties or they would be held liable.

The Syrian authorities did not pay any attention to the frequent reports about the on-going cases of torture. However, it announced the formation of an investigating committee to look into the death of Hamza al-Khatteb following the attention his case received from the media. The results of the biased committee announced that the Syrian authorities were in no way responsible for his death or torture. No details were given about the investigation.

In addition to men, detained women, children and elderly were also tortured by the regime. It is worth mentioning that the popular Syrian revolution began when a number of children from Daraa were arrested in February 2011 and severely tortured (for example, their nails were pulled out). Atif Najib, the president's cousin and head of the political security branch at that time, supervised their capture.

Systematic rape

Sexual violence is one of the main methods used by the security forces to torture both male and female detainees and in some cases, even children. Several testimonies given to SHRC stated that girls as young as 12 have been raped. The regime is using kidnapping and rape to punish individuals and families involved in the revolution. At least 1570 cases of kidnapping and rape have been recorded, in which brutal and sadist methods were used against women.

Members of the security forces, the armed forces and the Shabiha are used to carry out these crimes, while women are recruited and paid to help take part in kidnapping the victims.

The cases documented by SHRC are based on testimonies given by kidnapped and raped victims, captured members of the army and the Shabiha and defected members of the army and the Shabiha.

According to these testimonies, the targeted girls and women include those who belong to cities, villages and neighbourhoods which oppose the regime in addition to those who are related to active members of the revolution or who are active themselves by taking part in the demonstrations, expressing their opinion or giving medical aid and support. The victims are usually raped individually or collectively in their cities, their village squares, their raided homes, their prison cells, detention centres and in private houses used specifically for this purpose.

According to the testimonies of the detainees and those of the defectors, rape is used as a method to: extract confessions from detainees, punish activists taking part in the revolution and collectively punish the area which they belong to. In addition, it is used as a method to vacate large areas by forcing families to flee from their homes and seek refuge in other neighbouring countries, which is what happened in Homs.

Members of the security forces mention in filmed confessions how they kidnapped women from the security crossings and raped them

during house raids and in detention centres, security branches, village squares and remote areas.

Abdul Kareem al-Nabhan, former head of the air force security branch in Homs, stated in a confession after his capture that “the Syrian people are people who value their honour which is why the regime is attempting to exert pressure on civilians by kidnapping girls and women and blackmailing their families [and is attempting to] punish activists in the revolution by raping their female family members”.

In all documented case, the kidnapping and rape were committed on a sectarian basis. Sunni women were kidnapped and raped in Alawite villages and by Alawite members of the security forces and the Shabiha.

A member of the security forces admitted that the kidnappings were aimed at a certain type of women; either Muslim women wearing headscarves or women involved in and supporting the revolution. He said that he received orders to target these types of women from the head of his security branch.

One of the defectors said: “Anything was permissible” while another defector called Azad confirmed that members of the Syrian army raped women regularly as part of a routine. He stated: “we had a torture chamber in our base” and that “they would bring women and girls and put them in a locked room and ask the soldiers to rape them”. He also stated that these women were usually killed afterwards. A woman captured by the activists confessed that she helped the Shabiha kidnap women using a taxi, in return for a certain amount of money.

In addition, the Shabiha and members of the security bodies kidnapped women from villages opposing the regime and sent them to villages that support it. In those villages, the victims were collectively tortured and raped, allowing families of those who died supporting the regime to vent and get their revenge.

Several testimonies also pointed out that members of Hezbollah, the Lebanese party fighting alongside the Syrian regime, also took part in raping women, especially in Homs. The perpetrators were identified by their distinctive Lebanese accent.

On the other hand, SHRC also received information about kidnappings carried out by opponents of the regime. However, these incidents have been very few and in some cases were done in order to release detained women held by the Shabiha or members of the security and to stop women who were involved in the kidnappings. In addition, some of the women kidnapped by the opposition were known to have tricked their colleagues and led to their capture. Few cases have also been documented in which Alawite women were kidnapped by the families of women kidnapped by the Shabiha and security forces. However, there have been no incidents recorded in which women supporting the regime were raped, despite their actions and the roles they have played in the kidnappings.

SHRC urges the regime's opponents to stop using this technique, whether or not the Shabiha and members of the security forces are using it, because it violates general human rights,

Systematic annihilation: targeting bakeries and cutting off flour supplies

At the beginning of 2012, the Syrian regime began a series of attacks on bakeries in order to collectively punish the inhabitants of the revolting areas. The first of these bakeries was al-Asheera bakery in Karm al-Zaytoon in Homs which was attacked on 16 January 2012. All the attacks (with the exception of Manbej bakery) were made while civilians were lined up in front of the bakeries to buy bread, this led to a large number of victims each time.

Sixty five similar cases have been recorded in the duration covered in this report. Most of the attacks took place in Aleppo between August and September 2012. The regime cut off all supplies of food, flour and fuel from the revolting areas, as a result there was a large shortage of bread and civilians would line up in crowds in front of bakeries to get their share of bread. Despite the long queues, the regime carried out the attacks anyway, resulting in a large number of victims.

The death tolls varied despite the large number of people surrounding the bakeries. When the sound of an aircraft was heard or when news about other bakeries being attacked was spread by activists, civilians would flee from the bakeries. Anti-regime activists managed to collect information about the attacks from the wireless frequencies used by military aircrafts. However, news only reached the relevant areas seconds before the attack. Twenty nine bakeries were attacked between 6.00am and 9.00am, while other bakeries were attacked at different times of the day.

The features of these attacks constitute to war crimes which target civilians and unarmed individuals and deliberately attack peaceful busy areas crowded with civilians. All of the attacks were carried out by aircrafts (i.e. by the regime) so they cannot have been accidental as the targets were clear.

Below are **some examples** of bakeries which have been targeted by the regime:

Al-Thara bakery, Qadi Askar – Aleppo, 16 August 2012

On 16 August 2012 at 5.45am an artillery shell was fired at a queue of civilians waiting in front of al-Thara bakery in Qadi Askar, Aleppo. Fifty people were killed and dozens were injured and transferred to Dar al-Shifaa hospital.

Kanju bakery, Muyassar – Aleppo, 16 August 2012

On 16 August 2012, at around 10.00pm, three artillery shells were fired at a large number of civilians waiting in a queue in front of a bakery in Muyassar, Aleppo. The first was fired 30 metres away from the queue, the second shell was fired across the road from the queue and the third was fired next to the queue. The second shell was fired a minute after the first, so people managed to flee. Three people were killed and dozens were wounded.

On 17 August 2012 (the following day), the same bakery was hit by a rocket completely destroying it. The bakery was shut at that time so there were no victims. On 20 August 2012, a bomb was dropped on two buildings in a street opposite the bakery, killing 12 people and injuring 25.

Aqyool bakery, Bab al-Hadded – Aleppo, 21 August 2012

On 21 August 2012 at 6.00pm, two bombs were dropped near Aqyool bakery in Bab al-Hadded, Aleppo. One of the bombs hit the side of a building across a street full of people queuing for bread while the second bomb detonated 50 metres away from them. At least 23 people were killed and more than 30 people were injured.

Al-Hulwaniyye-Aleppo, 16 August 2012

On 16 August 2012 at around 6.00pm, an artillery shell was launched at a bakery in al-Hulwaniyye killing 13 people queuing in front of it. Dozens of others were injured.

Hilfaya – Hama, 23 December 2012.

On 23 December 2012 a MiG aircraft shelled a large gathering of people in front of an automated bakery in Hilfaya, Hama. Ninety four people were killed and hundreds were injured. This attack came a day after the Free Syrian Army (FSA) gained control over Hilfaya, north western Hama.

Collective punishment and besiegement

The Syrian regime used a number of methods to collectively punish the revolting cities in order to force its opponents and anti-regime activists to flee their cities or surrender.

Examples of collective punishment carried out by the regime include: besieging revolting cities, cutting off all food and medical supplies, cutting off main services such as electricity, water and phone lines and banning civilians (including pregnant women, elderly and injured people) from entering or exiting their cities and villages.

Below are some examples of the collective punishment practiced on the revolting cities and governorates:

Daraa

On 4 May 2011, the armed forces laid a siege on the governorate of Daraa. The 4th Armoured Division led by Maher al-Assad, the president's brother, besieged the area with tanks. It banned people from entering and exiting and cut off all food and medical supplies. It also cut off main services such as electricity, water and phone lines. The siege continued till the end of the following month, then began to gradually ease.

Banias

On 3 May 2011, the armed forces laid a siege on Banias in which basic services in addition to food and medical supplies were cut off following the large demonstrations that took place there. The siege lasted for ten days.

Al-Rastan and Talbiseh

Both al-Rastan and Talbiseh were besieged on 29 May 2011 and attacked killing and injuring dozens of civilians. The siege lasted till 17 June 2011.

Baba Amr

Baba Amr was besieged a number of times since the beginning of the revolution and many crimes were committed there. For example, on 29 October 2011 the military forces laid a complete siege on the area which lasted for almost a week. In mid-January 2012 the regime's forces laid a full siege on Baba Amr in Homs, banning any services, products or people from entering or exiting. During the siege, the area was shelled heavily destroying it almost completely. Other areas in Homs were besieged at the same time. The siege on Baba Amr lasted till March 2011 when the Syrian forces entered the area. However, the general siege over Homs continues.

Talkalakh

On 14 May 2011, the armed forces laid a siege on Talkalakh on the outskirts of the Lebanese border. The siege lasted for at least two weeks despite the armed forces' claims that it ended its operations there on 19 May 2011.

Latakia

The siege on Latakia began on 14 August 2011. Both water and electricity supplies were cut off from the city and no products or people were allowed in or outside the city. A military incursion also began targeting al-Raml al-Janoobi. This was the first time both land and air armed forces were used in the Syrian revolution. Military operations in al-Raml al-Janoobi ended but the siege on Latakia continued for months after that.

Homs

The siege on the old city of Homs is considered one of the longest in the history of the revolution. It started in mid-July 2012 and remains till the time of writing this report. Electricity and water supplies in addition to food and medical supplies have been cut off from the city. People are banned from entering and exiting the city as well.

Aleppo

The armed forces laid a siege on several areas in Aleppo which the FSA managed to gain control over. It also laid a siege on the cities which were holding anti-regime activities.

From mid-August 2012 and till the time of writing this report, electricity, water supplies and phone lines have been cut off from different neighbourhoods which the regime no longer has control over such as: Salahuddin, Tareeq al-Bab, al-Sha'ar, al-Maghayer, al-Saliheyte and others.

Cutting off medical supplies and targeting field hospitals

The armed forces cut off medical supplies from all the revolting areas and also banned the ill and injured from passing through its security crossings in several areas in different cities. It also targeted both field and public hospitals, ambulances, paramedics and doctors. According to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, all these actions constitute to war crimes and are clear violations of the international humanitarian law.

The regime's forces also denied many injured demonstrators medical help. Demonstrators who sought medical treatment in health centres risked getting caught and having their rights violated, which forced many people to seek help from field clinics rather than hospitals. Some doctors and hospital staff have been detained and assaulted as a result of their participation in the demonstrations or due to the support they have given to injured demonstrators. There have been many cases in which the armed forces denied ambulances access to injured victims and in which they targeted medical staff. Humanitarian workers have also been detained and assaulted whilst attempting to offer their support.

Furthermore, SHRC has received several testimonies about pro-regime doctors and medical staff who have taken part in torturing injured civilian seeking treatment in public hospitals. According to the cases recorded by SHRC in the period covered in this report, at least 281 people have been killed because the armed and security forces have denied them access to hospitals for treatment. There have also been several cases where victims lost their lives or incurred permanent disabilities due to their inability to receive the needed treatment and medication as a result of the sieges on their cities. However, their exact numbers cannot be estimated.

Below are some examples of the regime's violations against hospitals and medical staff:

Targeting doctors and paramedics:

The first documented incident in which a nurse was targeted occurred on 8 April 2011. Muwaffak Hasan al-Dakhllallah was killed by the armed forces while he was on duty in the city of Daraa.

Dr. Sakher Hallak, who ran a clinic for eating disorders, was detained on 25 May 2011. Two days later, he was killed in a security detention centre in Aleppo. When his corpse was returned, his ribs, arms and fingers were broken, his eyes were gouged and his genitals were mutilated. He was most likely targeted because he signed a petition demanding granting permission to all doctors to treat all injured individuals, including injured demonstrators.

Al-Bir hospital in Homs was raided by the security forces on 7 September 2011. Eighteen injured patients were detained including 5 who were still in the operation rooms.

On 7 September 2011, the armed forces and the Shabiha fired at Hakam Darrak al-Sbaa'i, a paramedic in the Red Crescent, while he was on duty. He was seriously wounded and passed away on 15 September 2011.

The corpse of Muath al-Fares, the managing director of the National Hospital in Taldou, Homs, was returned to his parents on 24 November 2011. He died in the detention centre during torture.

Al-Badr Hospital, a hospital on the road from Hama to Homs) was also targeted by the armed air forces on 14 February 2012.

Dr. Mohammed al-Khadraa', a volunteer with the Red Crescent, was killed on 24 April 2012 when the security forces targeted the ambulance he was in.

On 22 June 2012, Bashar al-Yusuf who was a paramedic with the Syrian Red Crescent was killed when the armed forces opened fire at him while he was on duty in Deir Ezzor.

On 25 September 2012, the armed forces raided al-Fateh Hospital in Kafarbatna, Rif Dimashq. They targeted both the patients and

medical staff and then burned down the hospital. More than 30 corpses were found which were killed as result of direct shooting.

Fouad Bubis, a paramedic and Red Crescent volunteer, was killed by the members of the security forces and Shabiha while he was on duty in Douma on 28 October 2012.

On 21 November 2012, a fighter aircraft targeted Dar al-Shifaa' Hospital in al-Sha'ar, Aleppo. It dropped an explosive barrel on the hospital leading to the death of 20 civilians including the hospital medical staff.

On 3 December 2012, the Children's Hospital at Deir Ezzor was also shelled. Dozens of children were killed and injured.

On 21 December 2012, field sources confirmed the death of Mohammed Khaled al-Homsi, a paramedic and activist in the revolution in Kafarbatna, Rif Dimashq. He was shot at by the regime's forces whilst fulfilling his humanitarian duty and treating some of the injured peaceful demonstrators targeted by the regime in Kafarbatna, Rif Dimashq.

Targeting civilians

Since the start of the revolution on 15 March 2011, the regime's forces, security bodies and militias known as the Shabiha, have been using excessive force with civilians. Areas populated with civilians have been indiscriminately targeted, resulting in the death of tens of thousands of Syrians in the two years covered in this report.

Daily events witnessed in Syria, since the beginning of the revolution till the writing of this report, confirm that targeting civilians and indiscriminately targeting cities populated with civilians are methods used by the regime, systematically and deliberately, in order to cause the largest number of civilian casualties.

Several types of armoury and weapons have been used against civilians. Lethal bullets have been used since 18 March 2011 in Daraa, resulting in the first immediate deaths in the revolution.

In addition, snipers were used and spread in the revolting areas for many reasons such as creating demarcation lines between the rebels and the armed forces and besieging different neighbourhoods. It is estimated that 5000 Syrians have been killed by snipers, mostly in Homs and Aleppo followed by Rif Dimashq and Deir Ezzor. In all cases documented, civilians were targeted by snipers whilst carrying out their normal daily errands.

Furthermore, the navy forces targeted civilians in the al-Raml Palestinian refugee camp and its surroundings during an incursion on Latakia in the beginning of August 2011. The regime's forces did not hesitate to use heavy weapons against civilians and civilian areas. According to documentations made, armoured vehicles and tanks were used a few days after the start of the revolution while airstrikes began in 2012 and have now become a daily event in several Syrian governorates.

In mid-2012, the regime's forces began using helicopters armed with machine guns to fly over the revolting areas and indiscriminately

open fire at different areas of the cities causing large numbers of casualties.

The use of Scud missiles against civilians was first documented in February 2012 in Baba Amr, Homs. By the end of 2012, the use of Scud missiles became a daily event in the northern areas, especially Aleppo and Idlib, where rockets are launched from Brigade 115 in Qalamoon, Rif Dimashq.

Scud missiles have the ability to completely destroy almost a whole square kilometre. Its targets cannot be located accurately; therefore they are used to mainly cause as much damage as possible.

On countless occasions, the armed forces used lethal bullets on peaceful demonstrators killing large numbers of them. This has occurred occasionally during demonstrations or funeral processions in many Syrian cities. Furthermore, the armed forces, alongside other pro-regime bodies, have carried out many field executions at security crossings or during house raids in which a number of people were detained then shot at from close range.

According to confessions given by a large number of defected members of the armed and security forces, the orders they were given emphasised that they should put an end to the demonstrations “in any way possible”. Forces sent to the demonstrations were provided with lethal weapons, as admitted by the president himself in his speech to the prime minister on 16 April 2011. However, he stated that the deaths committed up to that date were due to the weakness of the police who were not trained to deal with demonstrations.

In all the cases in which the armed and security forces have killed civilians, whether passers-by, demonstrators or civilians in their homes, it was never proven that these casualties posed a threat to anyone.

Below are some examples of incidents in which excessive force and killing have been used since the start of the revolution in 15 March 2011 till the end of 2012:

- On 18 March 2011, at least four people were killed in Daraa. The victims took part in the peaceful demonstrations held there and were the first four victims killed in the revolution. All of them were shot with lethal bullets aimed at lethal areas of their bodies. On 23 March 2011, seven more people were killed in the same city when the security forces attacked al-Omari Mosque in which demonstrators sought refuge.
- On 17 April 2011, a festival was held to celebrate Evacuation Day in Bab al-Sbaa', but the Shabiha attacked the ceremony and killed 8 people. On 18 April, the people of Homs held a funeral procession for the victims then headed towards al-Saa'a square where they announced the formation of a protest. The armed forces stormed into the square at dawn, dozens were killed and injured.
- On 4 June 2011, it was reported that a sniper from the armed forces managed to kill 25 people who were taking part in the funeral procession of Basel al-Masri in Jisr al-Shughur. Others were injured, including a paramedic from the Red Crescent who was attending to one of the injured.
- On 12 January 2012, the armed forces shelled an evening demonstration condemning the massacre committed in al-Joura. At least 20 demonstrators were killed and dozens were injured and taken to al-Noor Hospital. The hospital was attacked by the armed forces in an attempt to kidnap the bodies of the deceased and injured. However, the FSA managed to face them.
- On 21 January 2012, four people were killed and others were injured when the armed forces attacked and opened fire at a funeral procession in Douma.

- On 28 January 2012, a number of people were killed and injured during an attack on a funeral procession in al-Huwayja, Hama.
- On 7 February 2012, the armed forces opened fire at participants in a funeral procession in Idlib.
- On 1 March 2012, 3 people were killed and others were injured when the armed forces opened fire at a funeral procession in Douma.
- On 21 May 2012, the armed forces opened fire at a funeral procession in Nahr Aisha.
- On 14 June 2012, the armed forces opened fire at the funeral procession of Malek Mohammed Addebel.
- On 30 June 2012, around 70 people were killed and others were injured by a bombed car that was parked on the street during a funeral procession in Zmalka, next to al-Tawba Mosque.
- On 7 August 2012, the armed forces opened fire at a funeral procession in Idlib.

Indiscriminate air shelling and rocket launching

At the beginning of the revolution, the armed forces targeted and carried out arrests in the revolting areas only, but since the second month of the revolution they started using artillery shells, mortars and rocket launchers to attack entire areas.

Many cities were later targeted and several neighbourhoods, in Homs and Aleppo specifically, were destroyed completely, leaving behind rubble similar to that of post World WarII.

Since 2012, the armed forces began using fighter aircrafts to shell different cities. Most of these cities were revolting cities such as Homs and Aleppo in addition to Deir Ezzor, Idlib, Daraa and Rif Dimashq. The armed forces also started using Scud missiles by the end of 2012 to attack different cities, especially in northern areas.

Below are some examples of the areas which were destroyed completely and largely:

Baba Amr, Homs

The armed forces laid a siege on Baba Amr, Homs at the end of 2011. They continuously shelled this area from then till the end of February 2012. Rocket launchers and mortars were used round the clock, and towards the end of February helicopters were used for the first time in the revolution. As a result of the on-going shelling on Baba Amr, the area which once had a population of 35.000 people has become a ghost city and all of its buildings are now in rubble.

The old neighbourhoods of Homs

Homs's old neighbourhoods have been largely destroyed due to the on-going shelling by the armed forces and the militias working alongside them. Large sections of the city have been destroyed such as: Jouret al-Shayah, al-Qarabees, al-Qusour, al-Khalidiyye, Bab Tadmur, Bab Turkman, Bab Hud, Bab al-Dreeb, Bab al-Masdood, Saleibet al-Asayati, al-Warsheh, al-Safsaf, the Old Souk, wadi al-Sayeh, Bustan al-Diwan and al-Hameedeyye.

These areas were destroyed over several stages: the first being during the first siege on the city which started in January 2012 and continued till the FSA gained control over Baba Amr on 1 March 2012, the second being during the big siege on Homs which began on 9 June 2012 which remains till the moment of writing this report.

During these stages, these areas were attacked by mortars, artillery shells, tanks and rocket launchers. As a result, most of the inhabitants were displaced, all of the buildings were destroyed and thousands of people were killed and injured.

Salahuddin, Aleppo.

When the FSA managed to enter Aleppo in August 2012, the armed forces laid a siege on Salahuddin and shelled it regularly till the end of September 2012 which led to the displacement of most of its inhabitants and the destruction of its streets and buildings turning them into rubble.

Karm al-Jabal, Aleppo

In November 2012 the armed forces shelled and launched rockets at Karm al-Jabal for months. According to citizens, two thirds of the neighbourhood was destroyed.

The use of internationally banned weapons

The armed forces are using internationally banned weapons against the Syrian people's uprising. Internationally banned weapons have been used repeatedly in several areas.

On 9 October 2012, activists in the revolution managed to record the bombing of al-Taman'a in the suburbs of Idlib. The remains of the bombs dropped by the MiG aircrafts were collected and military experts have confirmed that they are cluster bombs.

On 19 October 2012, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man was shelled with cluster bombs killing 4 people and injuring others. The remains of the bombs were collected and recorded. On the same day, cluster bombs were dropped on al-Tah, a town next to Ma'arrat al-Nu'man. Some of them detonated while others did not. The remains of both were photographed and filmed.

On 19 October 2012 and on 23 October 2012 the Eastern Ghouta in Rif Dimashq was shelled with cluster bombs. The remains of the bombs were filmed.

On 16 November 2012 al-Buwayda al-Sharqeyye in Homs was shelled with cluster bombs and activists managed to film the exact moments the bombs were dropped. The remains of the bombs were filmed as well.

On 28 November 2012, media activists in Kinsabba in the suburbs of Latakia managed to film the exact moment a military aircraft dropped a cluster bomb on the region. They also filmed the remains of the bomb which military experts confirmed were cluster bombs.

On 10 December 2012, cluster bombs were dropped on Talbiseh in Homs. Media activists there managed to film the exact moment the bombs were dropped and filmed their remains.

On 28 December 2012 a military aircraft dropped cluster bombs on Salma in Latakia. Again, media activists managed to film the exact moment the bombs were dropped and filmed their remains.

On 17 October 2012, activists filmed the bombing of Taftanaz, northern Idlib. Experts confirmed that the bombs used were cluster bombs. Taftanaz was bombed again on 14 November 2012 and this also has been filmed.

On 25 November 2012, a MiG aircraft dropped cluster bombs on Deir al-Asafeer in Rif Dimashq killing 10 children. The bombing was filmed and so were the remains of the bombs.

International human rights reports have mentioned that the remains of bombs shown in the videos recorded by activists belong to cluster bombs type RBK 250 and the smaller type AO-1SCh bombs.

Evidence also shows that the Syrian military have used BM-21 Grad rocket launchers to fire 122mm cluster rockets with sub-munitions. The BM-21 is a multiple rocket launcher on a vehicle that can launch 40 rockets almost at the same time with a range of 4 to 40kilometres. This type of launcher is known for its inability to hit exact targets due to the lack of a navigation system in it.

Human Rights Watch has published reports stating that the Syrian military have used incendiary weapons in mid-November 2012 in at least four places which are: Darayya in Rif Dimashq, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man in Idlib, Babblia in Rif Dimashq and al-Qusayr in Homs.

Planting internationally banned landmines

Landmines remain a major threat to civilians in Syria. The annual report of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) has mentioned that Syria is the only country in which antipersonnel landmines were used in 2012.

Following the clashes that took place in Jisr al-Shughur in July 2011, the regime's forces planted Russian antipersonnel landmines in the bordering area with Turkey. This type of landmines were banned in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty which completely and comprehensively bans the use, production, trade and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines.

Testimonies taken in 2012 from the inhabitants of these areas mention that the Syrian military has planted landmines in al-Hasanye, al-Druned and Jafatlak, which are situated alongside roads taken by refugees to get to Turkey. The Syrian military informed the farm owners near the borders that permission from the military is required to enter those fields. However, they did not mention that they were mined.

On 13 March 2012, six Syrians volunteering at the Syrian-Turkish borders attempted to remove the antipersonnel landmines planted there.

On 1 November 2011, A Syrian government official told The Associated Press that “Syria has undertaken many measures to control the borders, including planting mines”.

On 9 March, The Washington Post published photos of PMN-2 antipersonnel mines and TMN-46 antivehicle mines that were reportedly planted by the Syrian army on the outskirts of the Syrian village of Heet near the northern Lebanese border and that were dug out by Syrian and Lebanese activists.

Targeting the media and journalists

The Syrian government has widely attacked the media throughout the Syrian revolution. International media was banned from entering Syria and when some channels were, they were not allowed to work freely. In addition, a number of foreign journalists and a large number of local journalists have been directly targeted, killed and detained.

Most local Syrian journalists who have been killed and detained are not affiliated with official newspapers; they are independent journalists who film the events taking place around them and report news to different media outlets. International reports did not include this type of journalists in their statistics and only recorded the numbers of those who actually worked with official press.

In this report, a journalist is defined as a person who practices verbal and written journalism and who gathers and spreads news to several media outlets. Therefore, both official journalists who are affiliated with a certain media organisation and voluntary independent journalists are included in this report. The total number of journalists killed in the duration covered in this report is 109.

In addition to targeting and detaining journalists, the Syrian regime has used its official and semi-official media to incite violence. The official state TV channels alongside Addounia, a pro-regime semi-official channel owned by the president's cousin, have broadcasted many programmes that promote killing demonstrators. In some cases, participants demanded killing one million people if necessary. In other cases, they demanded beating up the demonstrators, using various weapons against them and destroying their houses whilst they are in them.

Micheline Azar, one of Addounia's correspondents, presented a report about the massacre that took place in Darraya on 28 August 2012. In the report, she walked around the civilians' corpses on the ground and interviewed a little girl who was sleeping in her dead

mother's arms. The international media described her attempt to force words out of the little girl's mouth as "shocking".

The official Syrian media broadcasts reports almost daily from different parts of Syria, in which they "spontaneously" interview civilians. However, in videos recorded by media activists, members of the Shabiha and the military can be seen accompanying correspondents and presenters and standing behind the cameras forcing people to give testimonies that support the regime's version of events.

In addition to inciting violence, the official media broadcasts confessions of prisoners and detainees. According to defected members of the media, these detainees were interviewed after they were severely tortured or who were promised release in return.

Furthermore, the Syrian authorities have cracked down on civil society activists working in the field of freedom of speech by detaining them and preventing their material from being published in addition to other violations made over the last decade.

For example, on 30 November 2011 the Syrian authorities detained Razan Ghazzawi, an activist in the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, while she was on her way to Jordan to attend a conference on the freedom of press. A week later, she was brought to court and charged for inciting sectarian strife, spreading false information and weakening national sentiment. She was released on 19 December 2011 and then arrested again on 16 February 2012 then released on 18 February 2012.

On 17 February 2012, the Syrian security forces arrested Mazen Darwish, head of the Centre for Media and Freedom of Expressions, alongside his wife Yara Badr and activists Razan Ghazzawi, Hussien Ghareer, Hani Zeitani, Sanaa' Zeitani, Rita Dyoub, Juan Firso, Hanadi Zahlout, Sam al-Ahmad, Mayyada Khalil and Maha al-Siblati. Most of them were released on 12 May 2012, while Mazen Darwish, Hussien Ghareer and Hani Zeitani remain detained.

Another Syrian blogger, Tal al-Mallouhi, has been detained since 27 December 2009.

Below are **some examples** of cases in which Syrian and foreign journalists have been targeted or detained:

On 29 March 2011, Sulieman al-Khalidi, a Reuters journalist, was arrested. Whilst in detention, he was humiliated and tortured and he witnessed the torture of a large number of detainees. A few days later, he was released.

On 20 November 2011, satellite technician and photographer Farzat Yahya al-Jarban was detained in al-Qusayr by members of the Syrian intelligence. The next day, his body was found in a public road. His body carried clear signs of torture and both his eyes were gouged.

On 15 December 2011, Hamza Khaled al-Amer was killed by a RPJ whilst filming the army's incursion into Shamseen in Homs.

On 22 December 2011, Basel al-Sayyed was killed by random firing. Basel was actually filming himself, when he was shot. His colleague uploaded his last moments on Youtube.

On 28 December 2011, Muawiyah Inrahim Ayyoub was killed whilst the security forces were carrying out an incursion on al-Rastan in Homs. He filmed his last moments himself and his colleagues uploaded his video on Youtube.

On 11 January 2012, French photojournalist Gilles Jacquier who worked for TV France 2 was killed in a rocket attack in Ekrima in Homs whilst covering the news there. He was given an official permit to work in Syria. His colleagues said that a rocket was launched from an area controlled by the regime and that the official forces that were accompanying them disappeared minutes before the rocket was launched.

On 21 February 2012, Rami al-Sayyed was killed during the indiscriminate shelling of Baba Amr in Homs when it was under siege. He was one of the key providers of online videos during the

Syrian revolution. One day later, French journalist Remi Ochlik and American journalist Marie Colvin were both killed during the shelling of Baba Amr.

On 9 March 2012, the Syrian authorities detained Turkish journalists Adem Ozkose and Hamit Coskun for two months. They were released on 12 May 2012 following Iranian mediation.

On 9 April 2012, Ali Shaaban who was a presenter at Al-Jadeed TV (a pro-regime channel) was killed when the Syrian military opened fire at him and his team. Another correspondent, who was with Shaaban at the time, said that the military opened fire on them even though they had informed them of their identities.

On 17 April 2012, the armed forces arrested journalist Kahled Mahmood Qbeisho and repeatedly ran him over with a tank, killing him. His execution was filmed by an activist near the site and was uploaded on Youtube.

On 13 April 2012, Hasan Mohammed Azhari, a local independent journalist from Latakia, was arrested and taken to one of the security prisons in Damascus. He was tortured till his death on 17 May 2012. His corpse was given to his family 11 June 2012.

During the indiscriminately shelling of the Old City in Homs, Basel Shahade was killed by a mortar on 28 May 2012. Shahade was a documentary filmmaker who left his studies at Syracuse University in the USA to return to Syria and document the violations committed by the authorities against the demonstrators.

On 19 July 2012, Mohammed al-Husni, a cameraman and head of the al-Qusour media centre, was killed in the shelling of the neighbourhood.

On 4 August 2012, al-Nusra Front which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, released a statement declaring its responsibility for killing Mohammed al-Saeed, a presenter on official Syrian TV, who was kidnapped in mid-July in 2012.

On 13 August 2012, The Washington Post announced that it had lost contact with American journalist Austin Tice while he was in Syrian territories controlled by the regime.

On 20 August 2012, Japanese journalist Mika Yamamoto was killed by the military forces which targeted her in Sulieman al-Halabi in Aleppo.

At the same battle in which Yamamoto was killed Turkish cameraman Cuneyt Unal was arrested and Alhurra TV correspondent, Jordanian Bashar Fahmi, was injured. Unal was released on 16 November 2012 after a Turkish parliamentary delegation negotiated his freedom, but Fahmi remains in detention. Other than Cuneyt mentioning them being arrested together, little information is known about him.

On 9 September 2012, Syrian director Tamer al-Awaam was killed by the armed forces in Aleppo.

On 23 October 2012, Fatima Khaled Saa'd, a media activist, was killed in one of the intelligence security branches in Damascus. She died during torture.

On 2 November 2012, Hassan Haidar Hammoud, media activist and founder of the online Talbiseh Youtube channel, was killed while filming the shelling of al-Sa'n and Housh Hijjo in Talbiseh in the suburbs of Homs.

Refugees and displacement: escaping death and rape

Three million Syrians have abandoned their homes since the revolution began in March 2011, fleeing to other regions inside and outside Syria.

UN statistics show that the number of Syrian refugees has reached one million refugees by the end of 2012, scattered around different areas in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon with smaller numbers in Egypt, Iraq and other countries.

However, the number recorded by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees did not include the one and a half million displaced refugees within Syria itself or the thousands of Syrians who fled to live in neighbouring countries. Thousands of Syrians live outside the refugee camps.

According to the UNHCR, Syrians fled their country due to the on-going shelling, the organised massacres and the continuous siege which cut off main services from their towns and villages, making life impossible there. However, one of the main reasons behind their escape, especially in Homs, is rape.

Forcing civilians out of their homes was not enough. The armed forces repeatedly targeted refugees during their attempts to cross the borders. For example, groups of refugees were targeted while they were attempting to cross the Jordanian-Syrian borders in June 2012. Also in June, the Jordanian government said its forces crossed the borders to rescue a Syrian family that was being targeted after reaching the border.

Moreover, the armed forces planted landmines in the northern border areas especially following the events of Jisr al-Shughur. Dozens of civilians have fallen victims to these landmines whilst attempting to cross the borders.

Both Jordan and Turkey have opened their borders to allow Syrian refugees in. Refugees in Iraq however did not receive the same

treatment, as thousands of refugees at the Iraqi borders were denied access to the county while others were fired at in order to force them to go back. Furthermore, refugees in Lebanon have been harassed, assaulted and kidnapped by members of Hezbollah and its militias.

In Turkey, Syrian refugees are housed in 14 camps across four border provinces which are: Hatay, Gaziantep, Kilis and Sanliurfa. Refugees carrying passports were granted a renewable 3 month visa giving them freedom of movement in Turkey. However the visas, which need to be renewed in Turkish security centres, do not entitle them to any other types of support.

By the end of 2012, the number of refugees in Iraq reached an estimated 100.000 refugees, more than 90% of them placed in Iraqi Kurdistan which is not administratively part of the Iraqi central government.

The general conditions of the refugee camps are very poor. International organisations have not been able to provide the refugees with the necessary aid and have only provided them with basic support. However, the conditions of camps in Turkey and Jordan in 2012 have improved compared to 2011.

No water supplies are available in most of the Turkish camps, forcing refugees to visit neighbouring villages to get water. In the Jordanian Zaatari refugee camp, water has been provided through water tanks, but inconsistently.

Furthermore, there is a big lack of medical aid across the camps, leading to the spread of diseases and the death of many refugees, especially pregnant women and children.

Refugees in Jordan are suffering from the poor quality tents they are given by the UNHRC. The Zaatari camp is placed in a desert area where temperatures rise up to more than 50°C. Sand storms are very common and often blow the tents away. During winter on the other hand, refugees suffer from the sub-zero temperatures and floods. No heating equipment is provided.

On 15 August 2012, two Syrian children died as a result of a sandstorm that hit the camp.

On 11 November 2012, the camp was flooded and all its tents were dismantled as a result. Some refugees were injured as well.

On 28 November 2012, two babies under one year old died from the cold in Zaatari.

On 4 December 2012, three children died from the cold in the camp.

General services provided in Turkish camps are better than those in Jordanian camps due to the economical state which Turkey enjoys. However, there remains a shortage in water and electricity supplies. In addition, the tents were not able to carry the snow during the winters of 2011 and 2012.

Despite the generally good conditions provided in some areas and the facilitation of legal issues in Turkish camps, Syrian refugees have been prone to threats by the regime. The security forces have kidnapped a number of refugees inside Syria who were later detained or killed.

On 29 August 2011, Lt. Col. Hussien al-Harmoush, founder and leader of the Free Officers' Movement, was kidnapped from Turkish grounds alongside another 13 officers, On 15 September 2011, Addounia TV broadcasted an interview with al-Harmoush in which he expressed his regret about his previous stances. Signs of torture and exhaustion were seen on his face. This was the last time he was seen and his destiny remains unknown.

Despite the Turkish government's claims that it was not involved in this incident or any other similar incidents, it did not carry out any investigations or give any explanations about it.

By the end of 2012, more than 50.000 refugees lived in Egypt, most of which are not registered with the UNHRC. These refugees live in ordinary residences, taking advantage of the fact that Syrians are

entitled to live in Egypt for three months without the need for a visa or residency.

In Lebanon, most refugees live with Lebanese families. The UNHRC and other local and international organisations offer sums of money to these families in return for their hospitality.

It is worth mentioning that Syrian refugees in Lebanon have been repeatedly harassed by pro-regime parties in Lebanon, especially Hezbollah. In some cases, areas with Lebanese and Palestinian populations hosting Syrian refugees have been fired at and shelled. A number of refugees were killed as a result. Furthermore, some refugees have been kidnapped and handed in to the Syrian authorities by pro-regime parties or by the Lebanese security bodies.

A bizarre incident happened on 15 August 2012: it was claimed that the armed wing of the al-Miqdad tribe kidnapped a number of Syrian refugees as a response to the FSA kidnapping a member of their tribe.

Targeting children

Throughout the Syrian revolution, the armed forces alongside the security forces and the Shabiha have targeted children. The daily on-going events have proven that these forces are aiming to cause as many casualties as possible among civilians, including children. According to the statistics collected by SHRC, 5945 children have been killed in 2011 and 2012 as result of the indiscriminate shelling, the on-going siege on different cities, the lack of food and medical supplies and due to torture and murder.

As is commonly known, the Syrian revolution began when a number of children were arrested by members of the security branch in Daraa on 26 February 2011 after writing anti-regime slogans on a wall. Atif Najib, the president's cousin, was head of the security branch at that time. The children were tortured and their fingernails were pulled out. When their families visited, they were told to forget they ever had children and told to go back and make other ones! This incident led to an outrage in Daraa and sparked large demonstrations in the city.

In the period covered in this report, several incidents have been reported in which children and women have been repeatedly threatened for many reasons such as: blackmailing their relatives who are activists in the revolution, forcing active members of the revolution to hand in themselves and extracting confessions from them during detention.

In other cases, women and children have been used as human shields by the armed and security forces during house raids in order to prevent armed activists from shooting at them. This method was used when the armed forces entered or exited a city.

Several testimonies were given stating that the armed and security forces have tortured children and raped them in front of their parents in order to extract confession from them about a wanted member of their family or about any anti-regime activities they are involved in.

In addition, they have arrested, detained and tortured children in the same manner they have adults, regardless of their ages. Most testimonies given by released detainees mention that they shared their prison cells and rooms with children who were brutally tortured and in some cases died during torture.

In addition to targeting children, the armed forces have also targeted schools and nurseries which were used as detention centres, military barracks and sniper points. Furthermore, a large number of schools have been shelled and destroyed.

Several international reports have mentioned that the opposition forces have used children in their armed operations against the regime and that several videos uploaded by the opposition show children carrying weapons and wearing military uniforms. However, the opposition has stated that these children are only used for the recording and that no children were used in any of the armed operations. There have not been any cases in which children can be seen in videos actively or directly participating in combat.

Below are some examples of the violations committed against children, schools and nurseries in 2011 and 2012:

- In late March 2011, the armed forces laid a siege on Daraa as part of its crackdown on the city. Many children died due to the lack of food and medical supplies. As a result, a number of actors and artists signed a petition called “milk for the children of Daraa”.
- On 29 April 2011, a number of children were arrested including Tamer al-Shari and Hamza al-Khateeb whose bodies were heavily tortured and mutilated.
- On 14 October 2011, the armed and security forces opened fire at a demonstration leaving from al-Salam Mosque in Midan. Ten year old Mohammed Sheeban was shot and killed. Thousands of people participated in his funeral

procession which the armed forces also opened fire at. At least one person was killed and others were injured.

- On 25 May 2012, it was reported that 49 children were killed in al-Houla massacre in Homs in which 110 people were killed. Most of them were slayed by the army and Shabiha with white weapons.
- On 29 May 2011, the regime's forces opened fire at a children's school bus leading to the death of many of its passengers including young Hajar Tayseer al-Khateeb.
- On 9 June 2012, ten children were killed in al-Haffah.
- On 30 December 2012, MiG aircrafts raided al-sfeir village in Aleppo killing 14 people, 11 of them children.
- On 25 November 2012, a Syrian military aircraft dropped cluster bombs on al-Saraya in Deir al-Asafeer near Rif Dimashq killing at least 11 children and wounding others who were playing in a field there.
- On 3 December 2012, the armed forces shelled a children's hospital in Deir Ezzor killing and injuring dozens of children as a result.
- On 6 June 2012, members of the Shabiha from the villages Assele and al-Safsafeyye entered Maarzaf after besieging it with tanks. One hundred and forty people were killed, including 20 children and 20 women.

Targeting houses of worship

The Syrian regime attacked everything and anything throughout the revolution, including houses of worship. Seven hundred and twenty one mosques were damaged from March 2011 till the end of 2012. The attacks on the mosques varied from partly damaging a mosque to completely destroying it, its facilities and even the copies of the holy Quran it contains. Furthermore, Christian churches were attacked especially in Aleppo and Homs.

While some of the houses of worship were attacked deliberately, others were destroyed in the aftermath of the on-going shelling on the revolting cities. Many of the mosques and churches in Syria are ancient historical sites in which people have been worshipping God for more than a thousand years.

Below are some examples of houses of worship that were targeted by the regime throughout the period covered in this report:

On 10 August 2011, a tank shell was fired at the minaret of the Othman bin Affan Mosque in Deir Ezzor. The shelling was recorded by activists present at the site.

In May 2012, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas Mosque was attacked during the armed forces' incursion on Bab al-Sbaa' in Homs. After the army left the mosque, activists managed to record the aftermath of their attack. Most of the mosque's assets were destroyed including copies of the holy Quran.

In June 2011, the well-known Khaled bin al-Waleed Mosque was shelled with an artillery shell. It also incurred large damages during the on-going incursions and shelling the city went through.

In February 2012, the St. Mary Church of the Holy Belt in al-Hameedeyye (Mariam Azzinariah) in Homs was shelled by the military whilst the city was under siege.

Another mosque which was severely damaged is the ancient al-Omari Mosque in Daraa which was built in 710. The mosque was shelled on several occasions causing large damages. For example, on 7 March 2012, a military tank shelled the mosque directly, and on 23 March 2012 the security forces broke into the mosque and destroyed its assets.

The Kaa'b al-Ahbar Mosque in Homs was also shelled on several occasions, severely damaging its ancient minaret on 27 March 2012. On 6 September 2012, it was raided three times, destroying it completely. The mosque was built in 1700.

In August 2012, the armed forces surrounded the Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo. This mosque was built in 716 and was named by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. On 13 October 2012, the armed forces burned the mosque and its assets moments before they withdrew from it after the FSA's arrival. Its one thousand year old assets were severely damaged.

In August and September 2012, the Syriac Catholic Patriarch in Homs was damaged as a result of the on-going indiscriminate shelling by the armed forces.

Attacks on historical and archaeological sites

Throughout the revolution, several historical and archaeological sites were attacked by the regime's forces. Assessing the exact damage is very difficult due to the fact that these sites are scattered across different parts of the country, especially Aleppo which the UNESCO named as a World Heritage Site.

In addition, five ancient forts and castles were used by the military as airstrips, bases for snipers and rocket launchers. These forts were sometimes targeted by the opposition in clashes between them and the army inside them.

Furthermore, twelve museums were damaged and looted due to the state the instability the country is going through.

Reports published by the Protect Syrian Archaeology Society have mentioned that organised gangs have been carrying out excavations in several archaeological sites in order to loot any archaeological pieces they find, taking advantage of the instability the country is going through.

The UNESCO has not given any responses to the military attacks on these sites or to the fact that these sites have been shelled by aircrafts and other heavy weapons. Neither has it moved them from dangerous areas, an act it usually carries them out to other countries such as the case of Timbuktu, Mali where they were categorised again within days

Below are some examples of the ancient and archaeological sites that were attacked in 2011 and 2012:

On 14 July 2011, a golden statue dating back to the 8th century BC disappeared from the Archaeological Museum of Hama when the city was under the full control of the security forces. The statue remains missing despite the authorities' claims that they are investigating its disappearance.

On 26 February 2012, a civilian protection unit affiliated to the FSA reported that it shelled al-Zahrawi Palace in al-Hameedeyye

during clashes with members of the Syrian military who were using it as a fort. The palace was severely damaged as a result.

On 15 March 2012, the armed military forces shelled the Qalaat al-Madiq fortress in Afamiyya which was built on the ruins of a Roman castle more than a thousand years ago.

On 13 May 2012, Krak des Chevaliers known as Qalaat al-Hosn in Homs was shelled with artillery shells and mortars during an attack on the city that day. The castle was built in 580 and is named by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The Old City of Aleppo, also a World Heritage Site, was severely damaged from August 2012 till the end of the year. The city's Souk which was built in 1100 and is full of ancient archaeological buildings was set on fire on 29 September 2012 after being shelled by rockets. The Souk is a few kilometres wide, connecting the Old City to the fort which the regime's forces were using.

On 2 September 2012, a military aircraft shelled the only archaeological church in Abu Kamal, damaging it severely.

On 5 November 2012, the armed forces shelled the ancient al-Rahba fort in al-Mayadeen with heavy artillery. The fort was built in 874.

Since mid-2012, the Museum of Homs has turned into a military centre used whenever the city is attacked or besieged. It has been destroyed and looted and many of its exhibits, which date back to prehistoric times, have gone missing.

The second largest museum in Syria is the museum in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man which contains a large number of mosaic works. The museum was used as a military centre by the armed forces till the city was freed in August 2012 by the FSA. The FSA also placed a unit in front of the museum to protect it as those in charge of the museum mentioned that some of the museum's exhibits were taken by the army.

Legal and constitutional reforms

Throughout the last two years, the Syrian government made a series of important legal and constitutional reforms which all in all have been positive and responsive to the demands human rights organisation have been making for decades. The most important of these reforms were: lifting the state of emergency, removing Article 8 from the constitution and abolishing the Supreme State Security Court.

However, these reforms did not have a real impact on the ground as they were accompanied by a complete lack of the rule of law. For example, most violations mentioned in this report were committed after the state of emergency was lifted including: murder, arbitrary detention, torture and other humiliating actions. Furthermore, since these reforms took place, legal procedures such as mock trials and arrest warrants have no longer been used.

Below are some examples of the legal reforms achieved in 2011 and 2012:

On 21 April 2011, the Syrian government lifted the state of emergency when the president issued legislative decree no. 161. The Emergency Law was in force in Syria since 8 March 1963 when the National Council for the Revolutionary Command issued military order no.2. This emergency state is the longest in history.

On the same day, the president issued legislative decree no. 53 which abolished the Supreme State Security Court, decree no. 54 which gave Syrian citizens the right to demonstrate peacefully and decree no. 55 about the role of the judicial police.

Legislative decree no. 53 abolished the Supreme State Security Court established by legislative decree no. 47 and its amendments on 28 March 1968. It also stipulates that all pending cases in the Supreme State Security Court and Public

Prosecution should be referred to the competent judicial authority as provided for by the Criminal Procedure Rules.

Legislative decree no. 54 regulates “the right to peaceful demonstrations as one of the basic human rights by the Syrian constitution”. However, it also mentioned that those who want to organise a demonstration should form a committee to submit a request to the Ministry of Interior including the date, starting time, place of gathering, course, finishing time, goals, causes and slogans of the demonstration, at least five days in advance. They should also provide a notarised document in which the committee pledges to take responsibility for all damages that may affect public and private properties and assets.

Legislative decree no. 55/2011 defined the tasks of the judicial police or those commissioned to carry out its tasks as: being responsible for investigating crimes mentioned in articles 260 - 339, 221, 388, 392 and 393 of the penal code, gathering evidence and holding a suspect against the state before referring them to a prosecutor for no longer than seven days, a duration which can be renewed up to 60 days by the attorney general depending on the details of each case.

According to decree no. 55, all tasks of the Supreme State Security Court have been transferred to the judicial police who are entitled to detain any person suspected of: treason (articles 263- 270 of the penal code), espionage (articles 271 -274 of the penal code), having illegal connection with the enemy (articles 275 and 277 of the penal code), committing any crimes which violate international law (articles 278-284 of the penal code), undermining the state’s prestige or weakening the national sentiment (articles 285-288 of the penal code, which were the basis on which humanitarian and political activists have been charged throughout the past few years), inciting strife (articles 298-303 of the penal code), terrorism (articles 204-306 of the penal code) and any other crimes which could disunite the

people or break the harmony amongst the nation's persons (articles 307-308 of the penal code).

The Syrian government also carried out constitutional reforms. On 15 October 2011, the president issued decree no. 33 which stipulates the formation of a national committee to prepare a draft of the constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic in preparation for its approval according to constitutional regulations.

The new constitution had many amendments. For example, the controversial Article 8 which defined the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party as the leading party in the society and state was amended to "The political system is based on the principle of political pluralism". In addition, Article 88 was added which limited the president's term of office to seven years with a maximum of one re-election. However, this Article will be applied to the president during his next term in 2014. Articles 150 and 155 about constitutional amendments were also added.

On 26 February 2012, the amended constitution was put to a referendum and was approved according to results announced by the authorities. Many human rights organisations challenged the results of the referendum considering the fact that many cities were under siege and attack at that time. As always, no local or international monitoring was permitted during the referendum.

On 3 August 2011, the president issued legislative decree no. 100 regarding the Parties Law. The decree was considered progressive considering the fact that it permitted the formation and organisation of political parties.

The president also removed a number of officials in regions that witnessed large violations from their positions. However, they were not presented to court and were replaced by officials who committed worse violations than their predecessors.

In 2011, the governors of Daraa, Deir Ezzor, Homs, Aleppo and al-Quneitra were also replaced, and the governor of Hama was removed from his post on 2 July 2011 when one of the largest demonstrations in the history of the city came out, without being interrupted by the security forces in any way.

On the other hand, the president decreed a number of amnesties in 2011 and 2012. The first was decree no. 34/2011 issued on 7 March 2011, granting amnesty for all crimes committed till that date, excluding political crimes. The second was legislative decree no. 61 issued on 31 May 2011 granting general amnesty for all crimes committed before that date. The amnesty included members of political parties and half of criminal crimes in which no personal claims existed. A number of political prisoners were released following this decree. The third was legislative decree no. 72 issued on 21 June 2011 granting general amnesty to all crimes committed before that date.

References

This report is centred around the researches and press releases published by the Syrian Human Rights Committee as well as data it gained during the preparation of the report through face-to-face interviews with eye-witnesses and activists, and the analysis of videos and news published on the internet. Information was also gained from statements and reports released by the following colleague organisations:

- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International
- Syrian Network for Human Rights
- Association for the Protection of Syrian Heritage
- League of Syrian Journalists.



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