



ISIS tightens its grip and occupies more Syrian lands Nearly 367 victims, 240 missing persons and 33 thousand displaced individuals are the result of this attack on Abu Hamam City in Deir Al Zour in August 2014

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I- Introduction:

Abu Hamam City, 65 Km away from the center of the province, is located in the eastern countryside of Deir Al Zour governorate. Two towns administratively belong to the city, as it is considered a stronghold of Al Sha'aytat tribe.

ISIS, the terrorist organization the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State, or “Daesh” in Arabic – gained grounds in most of the eastern regions in Deir Al Zour in July 2014 after lengthy battles with An-Nusra Front and some armed opposition groups. It should be noted that most of the armed opposition members belong to the aforementioned tribe.

On 3 July 2014, ISIS conducted an agreement with Al Sha'aytat tribe. This agreement states that the tribe would hand over their weapons in exchange for ceasing the fight. Few days later, ISIS denounced the agreement by arresting a number of the tribe's members, hence igniting clashes. On 5 August 2014, ISIS announced Abu Hamam City a military zone, ordered the residents to evacuate it, shelled the region with artillery and mortar missiles, then raided and invaded the city. On 10 August 2014, ISIS took complete control over the city in addition to the surrounding villages. Opposition forces withdrew while thousands of residents were displaced and went to Bu Kamal villages in Deir Al Zour, fearing ISIS revenge.





II- Executive Summary:

Massacres Committed by ISIS:

SNHR documented 15 massacres committed during the first 15 days of August 2014, in addition to a number of slaughtering and murdering cases. As a result, 367 individuals were killed; their death toll is detailed as follows:

91 civilians, amongst two children and two women

276 arrested armed men (arrested then shot to death)

Forced Displacement:

SNHR estimates the number of individuals forced to leave their city in Abu Hamam and neighboring towns by 33 thousand.

III- Report Methodology:

This report is based mainly on SNHR's archives and investigations, in addition to the testimonies of victims' families and relatives and information we collected from local activists and residents. The verified pictures and videos we receive are added to our archives that we have been updating regularly since 2011.

We conducted the interviews in Arabic and explained the purpose to witnesses and survivors. We received their approval as well. They requested that their names would be changed for security reasons. It took us three months to prepare this report due to the difficulty of reaching those witnesses, especially with ISIS tight grip on the region. You can refer to earlier reports about ISIS issued by SNHR.

On 19 July 2014, SNHR documented [the displacement of 2100 families in eastern Aleppo suburbs due to ISIS actions](#).

On 21 September 2014, SNHR documented [the displacement of nearly 150 thousand citizens in Ein Al Rab region \(also known as Kobani\)](#).





IV- Committed Massacres:

SNHR documented 15 massacres committed by ISIS against civilians or arrested individuals. Most of the victims were shot-dead or slaughtered after ISIS stormed the city.

The death casualties are detailed as follows:

91 civilians, amongst two children and two women

276 arrested armed men

The most notable massacres committed against civilians:

On 7 August 2014, ISIS shot dead 24 civilians. Later we learned that these victims were from Al Sha'aytat tribe from Abu Hamam City who were workers and guards in one of the oil wells there.

Victims' Pictures:





@w_elkher

فشرّد بهم من خلفهم



@w_elkher

فشرّد بهم من خلفهم





On 7 August 2014, SNHR documented the death of 6 civilians who were shot dead by a firing squad next to Al Baloum roundabout in Al Mayadeen city in Deir Al Zour. [The victims were from the same tribe](#). They were displaced and forced to flee to Al Mayadeen City in Deir Al Zour.

On 9 August 2014, ISIS slaughtered 5 civilians from Abu Hamam city after abducting them. They decapitated the victims and mutilated their bodies. The victims' heads were displayed at the entrance of the city.

[A picture showing victims of ISIS](#)

On 10 August 2014, SNHR recorded the death of 10 civilians who were shot dead by a firing squad. One victim had his head decapitated.

Pictures showing victims of ISIS



On 10 August 2014, ISIS slaughtered 6 civilians, from Granij town, decapitated their heads and mutilated their bodies.



Most notable massacres committed against prisoners:

After ISIS stormed the city, they committed not less than 9 massacres against arrested armed men, and then shot them to death. Victims were buried in mass graves and the residents were able to discover some of the bodies later on. On 10 August 2014, ISIS shot dead [5 prisoners from Al Sha'aytat tribe](#). The murder happened when the men fled to Al She'fa town in Deir Al Zour.

[A video documenting the victims' bodies](#)

On 11 August 2014, [ISIS shot dead 5 prisoners](#) after they stormed the city.

On 26 August 2014, SNHR documented the death of 12 prisoners from the same tribe after residents discovered their bodies in a mass grave. Based on our information, we can estimate when the massacre was committed, which might be during the first ten days after ISIS invaded the town in August.





SNHR recorded the death of 10 individuals who were shot to death or slaughtered, then buried in mass graves in Ghranij town when inhabitants discovered the bodies in January 2014. We believe that the massacre was committed during the first ten days of ISIS invasion in August.



SNHR documented the death of 7 prisoners who were shot dead and slaughtered, then buried in mass graves in Ghranij town when residents discovered their bodies in January 2014. [We believe that the massacre was committed during the first ten days of ISIS invasion in August.](#)

SNHR documented the death of 115 individuals, including 122 prisoners shot to death and slaughtered, two children and a woman. Victims were buried in a mass grave in Abu Hamam region.

We believe that the massacre was committed during the first ten days of ISIS invasion in August.

A [video](#) depicting the victims' bodies in the mass grave:

SNHR documented the death of 20 prisoners who were shot-to-death and slaughtered, then buried in a mass grave in Ghranij town. The residents discovered the massacre at the end of December 2014. We believe that the massacre was committed during the first ten days of ISIS invasion in August.

[A video depicting the mass grave found in Ghranij town](#)

SNHR also recorded the death of 12 prisoners who were shot-to-death and slaughtered, then buried in a mass grave in Ghranij town. The residents discovered the massacre at the end of December 2014. We believe that the massacre was committed during the first ten days of ISIS invasion in August.





V- Forced Displacement

It was not enough for ISIS to mutilate dead bodies, or loot and bomb houses, but they forced residents of Abu Hamam to flee their city. Displacement started on 10 August 2014 and lasted until the end of the month; most of the residents were displaced and went to Bukamal town, others went to Al Mayadeen and Ishara cities (in Deir Al Zour). Some families even left Deir Al Zour and fled to Turkey. However, residents who could not afford moving to nearby towns were forced to live in schools or in tents. They have been living like that for almost a year now.

SNHR estimates the number of individuals forced to leave their city in Abu Hamam and neighboring towns by 33 thousand. Those civilians were left homeless, unemployed, and in dire strait.

ISIS issued a “Fatwa”, an Islamic legal pronouncement issued by an expert in religious law pertaining to a specific issue, justifying their violations against civilians and their properties by saying they were “spoils of war”. However, it should be noted that ISIS sold a great deal of the confiscated properties in Deir Al Zour markets.





Regarding residents' houses, ISIS either bombed or confiscated it. ISIS confiscated houses if it belonged to civilians and bombed 55 houses since it belonged to armed opposition members or to members from An-Nusra Front.

ISIS deployed their troops even more, established a combat camp next to the city, and blocked all the roads leading to it.

On 25 November 2014, ISIS imposed their terms in exchange of letting residents back to their towns.

These terms and conditions were:

- Handing over any kind of personal weapons, otherwise individuals will be killed
- Destroying the house over the heads of its inhabitants, if proved to cover for a wanted individual for ISIS.
- Attending mandatory daily religious seminars in mosques for any person above 16 years old.
- Submitting a personal photo, mandatory, for every “repentant” person above 16 years old.
- Displaced persons can return if:
 - they did not fight ISIS
 - they repented fighting ISIS. However, they have to move to a different region known to the group.
- Residents of Ghirinij and Kashlashiyi towns agreed to ISIS terms and conditions and went back to their towns while Abu Hamam residents refused. Until June 2015, not more than 30% of the residents went back to their cities.

Ahmad, 27, from Abu Hamam, told SNHR:

“We were displaced after ISIS accused us of infidelity and apostasy, knowing that I did not fight them. However, the displacement policy was general and did not exclude anybody. We were displaced to a school and were in a dire state. We received little humanitarian aid from Bukamal families. We still dream of going back to our city.”

Abo Hussien, one of the tribe's elders in Deir Al Zour said:

“We formed a delegation and demanded ISIS to let members from Al Sha'aytat tribe to return to their city. Some of ISIS commanders agreed, while others disagreed. However, we were promised that they will allow the residents to return to their houses before Ramadan, and until now, this promise has not been fulfilled.”





SNHR spoke to Abu Harith, one of the armed opposition group members, who fought against ISIS in Abu Hamam city:

“We did not have enough weapons, thus we had to withdraw. As a result, ISIS revenged and committed dozens of massacres against the residents. Most of the victims were civilians shot dead or slaughtered then buried in mass graves.”

Since June 2015, ISIS allowed almost 80% of the families to gradually return to their city after their forced displacement. Some residents stated that they do not trust ISIS pardon and fear their revenge, thus they did not return to their towns.

VI- Evidence and Annexes:

A video depicts ISIS members saying: “this is a warning for infidels to obey the Islamic State” when they bombed houses in Abu Hamam city



A statement recited by the elders of Deir Al Zour tribes asking for ISIS pardon regarding the “Al Sha’aytat” tribe





A video depicting some of Deir Al Zour tribe elders disowning some members of Al Shta'ytat tribe, who fought ISIS, and seeking amnesty from ISIS commander, Baghdadi.



[One of ISIS members justifying killing and displacing residents](#)

[A video](#) depicting arrested members from Al Sha'aytat tribe being beaten and humiliated by ISIS

[A video depicting destruction in Abu Hamam city after shops](#) been looted by ISIS members

[A video depicting a number of workers shot dead by ISIS](#) next to an oil well



A picture showing a vehicle transporting displaced residents



A picture showing one of the looted shops





A picture showing Al Kahawi region in Abu Hamam city after ISIS invasion.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights affirms that bombardment, displacement and detainment targeted armless civilians thus; ISIS has violated the articles of the international law for human rights which guarantee the right to live. These violations committed by extremist Islamic groups can be classified as war crimes.

SNHR demands that the United Nations and the Security Council to implement the principle of “protecting civilians” adopted by the General Assembly in 2005. Syrian people should be protected from all perpetrators.

The Syrian crisis must be addressed as quickly as possible. Leaving the Syrian people alone facing two killing machines, characterized by the government and ISIS, will surely lead the community to more extremism amidst complete absence of justice and breaches in the Security Council resolutions.

Acknowledgment

Our thanks and appreciations go to the victims’ families, eyewitnesses, and local activists whose testimonies contributed majorly to this report. Our most profound consolations go out to the victims’ families and friends.

