The Lethal Ceasefire: "The Death of 63 Civilians, 21 "amongst Which Died From Hunger

Syrian government forces (army, security forces, local and foreign militias) use hunger as a weapon of war for years in regions under the control of armed opposition. This systemized weapon of human destruction had its impact on the Syrian society, whereas the latest victim of siege and hunger has been Madaya town in Damascus suburbs. Madaya town is located in Damascus suburbs and has been under siege since the end of 2013.

Within the month of July 2015, government forces tightened its grip on the town. Military checkpoints prohibited the entrance of any kind of food to the town (including Kazeyat Nabaa' Barada checkpoint, Al Wazeer checkpoint, Al Methana checkpoint and Al She'baa checkpoint). Also, military barracks (Al Talae' and Al Takeye Barracks) withheld the entrance of food supplies or fuel to the town and planted hundreds of anti-personnel landmines around the agricultural lands that surround the town.

Even though the truce which was signed in 24 September 2015 stated that the siege shall be broke off of Madaya, however, food aid under the patronage of the UN entered the town only once on 18 October 2015. Some of the food items had expired dates which resulted in not less than 200 food poisoning cases. We have issued a full report about this incident and demanded the UN to investigate this matter and hold the persons who were responsible for the distribution of food accountable. However, the result of this investigation is still unannounced.

During the last 6 months the siege worsened the humanitarian situation in Madaya which inhabits almost 43 thousand individuals, including 300 families who previously fled from Al Zabadani. Medicine and pharmaceutical supplies were out of

stock, which caused the death of several individuals who suffered from chronic diseases. Commodity prices surged dramatically where one kilogram of rice peaked to 115 US dollars, one kilogram of baby formula reached nearly 180 US dollar. Some of the residents had to eat herbs and leaves in order to stay alive.

Image that depict victims of siege and starvation in Madaya town

Since July 2015 and up till the moment of making this report, SNHR documented the killing of 63 civilians, detailed as follows:

A. Deaths due to the imposed siege by government forces:

• 21 individuals died from hunger, including 8 children and 3 women.

• 8 individuals, including 2 women died due to the lack of medicine and medical care.

B. Trying to flee from Madaya:

SNHR recorded the death of 34 individuals who were killed while they were trying to leave the city, detailed as follows:

• 22 individuals died due to the planted landmines

• 8 individuals were shot by government checkpoints

• 4 individuals died due to government sniper bullets.

After displaying shocking images of the residents who are being starved to death, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs issued a belated statement which demanded the facilitated entry of any food supplies to different besieged regions. This statement does not live up to the required level of responsibility. As defenders of human rights, we feel deep sorrow that Mr. Ra'ad Bin Zeid Al Houssein, the representative of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, did not issue and any statement or publish any news about the latest catastrophic human tragedy in Madaya.

Image that depict victims of siege and starvation in Madaya town

SNHR also assures that the siege bares a sectarian violence since the Lebanese terrorist party Hizbollah has been an accomplice in the imposed siege. The residents have told us that they were forced to sell their properties in exchange of food that would keep them alive, which exposes us to another dilemma, which is demographic change if Hizbollah members are buying the Syrian properties in this town. Without a doubt, this crisis will put the Syrian Republic in the transitional stage on the edge of danger while unfortunately; UN Security Council resolutions 2139, 2165, and 2254 have not been implemented.

Syrian Network For Human Rights
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان