



## Syrian Government's Use of Barrel Bombs in August 2015

### Barrel Bombs Killed 115 Individuals, including 37 Children and 31 Women 1591

#### Report Content:

- I. Introduction
- II. Report Methodology
- III. Report Details
- IV. Conclusions and Recommendations.
- Acknowledgments

#### Introduction:

By daily observing and recording the violations after the beginning of the popular protests in March 2011, we found out that first significant use of barrel bombs by government forces (Military forces, security forces, local militias, and foreign Shiite militias) was on Monday 1 October, 2012 in Idlib – Silqean town where a helicopter dropped a barrel bomb on a two-floor residential building which collapsed completely and 32 civilians, including seven women and seven children, were killed in addition to 120 others who were injured as shrapnel scattered everywhere. It is worth noting that this might not be the first time barrel bombs were used but it was the first time it was used in such a notable manner. The international community was not familiar with that kind of weapon yet. Barrel bombs are random weapons and locally made, since it is less expensive and causes massive destruction and a great loss of lives. 99% of the casualties are civilians, where the percentage of targeted women and children ranges between 12 and 35%.

The same as with any new weapon, government forces cautiously waited for the international community's respond as the Syrian government deems the international community's silence or condemnation a red light to use and employ this weapon on a larger scale which was the case when it started using aerial weapon, poison gases, cluster munitions, and Scud missiles.

The Security Council waited a year and a half before adopting resolution 2139 on 22 February, 2014 which condemned the use of barrel bombs and mentioned it by name: "Demands that all parties immediately cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs" The Syrians welcomed the resolution because it expressed an intention to take further action in the events of non-compliance.





The Syrian government, through its allies at the Security Council first and the other states' failure to shoulder their legal and moral role, disregarded resolution 2139 the same way it disregarded resolution 2118, adopted on 27 September, 2013, resolution 2042 and 2043, adopted in April 2012. The Syrian government fully realizes that there are no serious consequences of its action where its forces are openly and proudly violating the Security Council resolutions and international laws (A pro-government politician said on TV that the Syrian government should use nuclear weapons to attack the areas outside its control). Our daily documentation of violations shows that there is no notable difference before 22 February, 2014 (resolution 2139) and after. SNHR studies and reports prove that most of the attacks were deliberate and targeted crowded civilian areas. The government's aerial bombardment, displacement and destruction it causes are apparently aimed at thwarting the establishment of any governance model that may serve as a substitute for the Assad government.

## II. Executive Summary

### **Barrel Bombs Used in August 2015:**

Through our daily documentation, SNHR team was able to document the use of not less than 1591 barrel bombs in August 2015, detailed as follows:

Damascus Suburbs: 894

Daraa: 300

Idlib: 115

Hama: 114

Aleppo: 90

Homs: 60

Lattakia: 10

Al Qunaitra: 4

Damascus: 2

Deir Al Zour: 2

The use of barrel bombs as random weapons killed 115 individuals, including 73 children and 31 women, according to the documentation team in SNHR.

The classification of the victims' death toll according to Syrian governorates:

Damascus suburbs: 31 individuals were killed including 16 children and 9 women.

Daraa: 27 individuals were killed including 1 child and two women.

Idlib: 26 individuals were killed including 10 children and 8 women.

Aleppo: 17 individuals were killed including 6 children and 9 women.

Homs: 12 individuals were killed.

Hama: 8 individuals were killed including 4 children and 3 women.

### **Targeting Vital Facilities:**

We could not document all destructions caused by barrel bombs, therefore we recorded the number of vital facilities targeted by government aviation, i.e. markets, schools, hospitals and houses of worship.





During August 2015, not less than 16 vital facilities were targeted by barrel bombs:

**Medical Centers:**

Hospitals and medical regions: 2 were targeted

**Residential Neighborhoods:**

Markets: 1

Houses of Worship:

Mosques: 8

**Infrastructure:**

Power Stations: 3

### III. Report Details:

***A. Victim's death toll due to the use of barrel bombs, distributed as follows according to the Syrian governorates:***

**Daraa Governorate:**

On 1 August 2015, a woman died of her wounds due to shelling with barrel bombs on Tafas town in Daraa.

On 8 August 2015, a person died of his wounds due to the shelling with barrel bombs on Daraa Camp in Daraa city.

On 9 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Daraa Camp in Daraa city which killed one individual.

On 9 August 2015, government helicopters dropped three barrel bombs on Al Harrak city in Daraa suburbs which killed 3 individuals.

On 14 August 2015, government helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Al Yadouda Camp in Daraa which killed one individual.

On 15 August 2015, government helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Tal Shehab town which killed 8 individuals.

On 16 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on a crowded market in Daraa Al Balad in Daraa city which killed 8 individuals.

On 16 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Naseeb town in southern Daraa suburbs which killed 2 individuals, a woman and a gunman.

On 23 August 2015, government aviation dropped a barrel bomb on Daraa Al Balad neighborhoods in Daraa city which killed 2 individuals.





On 27 August 2015, government helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Dael town in Daraa suburbs which killed one individual.

On 29 August 2015, government helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Al Mezrereb town in Daraa suburbs which killed two individuals.

On 29 August 2015, government helicopters dropped four barrel bombs on Kaheel town in Daraa suburbs which killed 2 children.

On 30 August 2015, government aviation dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Soura town in Daraa suburbs which killed one individual.

### **Idlib Suburbs:**

On 2 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Tamanaa' town in Idlib suburbs, which killed 2 individuals.

On 4 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Habeet town in Idlib which killed a child.

On 12 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Khan Shaykhoun in Idlib which killed 3 individuals including 2 women.

On 21 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on the surrounding of Abu Al Dhour Airport in Idlib suburbs which killed one individual and a gunman.

On 21 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Idlib city that is under the control of armed opposition groups which killed 5 civilians from a displaced family (a mother and her four children).

On 22 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on the western neighborhood in Idlib city which killed one individual.

On 24 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Bara town in Idlib suburbs that is under the control of armed opposition groups which killed 18 individuals including 5 children and 5 women.

### **Aleppo Governorate:**

On 2 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Aseela neighborhood in Aleppo city which killed one individual.

On 2 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Sheikh Akhdar neighborhood in Aleppo city which killed an individual.





On 3 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Karm Al Beik neighborhood in Aleppo which killed 4 individuals (a child and 3 women).

On 7 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Hammiye town in Aleppo suburbs which killed 3 individuals (a child and two women).

On 8 August 2015, two individuals died (a child and a woman) after government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Jaloum neighborhood in Aleppo city.

On 22 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Tal Habatab town in Aleppo suburbs which killed a man and his wife.

On 23 August 2015, government helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Tal Sabe'en town in Aleppo suburbs which is located southern of Kweris military airport that is under ISIL's control. As a result, 5 civilians died from one family, (3 children and 2 women); also 6 houses were destroyed.

On 25 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Mashhad neighborhood in Aleppo which killed one individual.

On 27 August 2015, government helicopters dropped two barrel bombs on Hreytan town in Aleppo northern suburbs which killed one individual.

#### **Hama Governorate:**

On 4 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on on Kafr Zeita city in Hama which killed one individual.

On 14 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Latamina town in Hama northern suburbs which killed one armed individual who died two days later after his injury.

On 17 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Latamina city on Hama suburbs that is under the control of armed opposition groups and killed 6 civilians most of them were from one family, 3 children and 3 women.

On 30 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Madeeq Citadel town in Hama suburbs which killed one child.

#### **Homs Governorate:**

On 11 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Al Ghanto town in Homs governorate which killed 6 individuals.

On 13 August 2015, government helicopters dropped 15 barrel bombs on Palmyra city in Homs suburbs which killed 3 individuals.





### **Damascus Suburbs Governorate:**

On 11 August 2015, government helicopters dropped 8 barrel bombs on Madaya town in Damascus suburbs which killed one individual.

On 15 August 2015, government helicopters dropped 3 barrel bombs on Kafeer Al Zeit town in Damascus suburbs which killed 5 individuals including a child.

On 15 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Deir Mokren town in Damascus suburbs which killed 4 individuals including a child and two women.

On 15 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on Ein Al Fija town in Damascus suburbs which killed 16 individuals including 6 children and 4 women.

On 15 August 2015, government helicopters dropped 3 barrel bombs on Baseema town in Damascus suburbs which killed 8 individuals, including 5 children and two women, most of them were from one family.

On 26 August 2015, government helicopters dropped 12 barrel bombs on Madaya town that is under the control of armed opposition forces in Damascus suburbs. As a result, 5 individuals died from one family including 3 children and their mother.

### ***B. Targeting Vital Facilities with Barrel Bombs:***

#### **Hospitals and Medical Regions:**

On 21 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Rahma Hospital in Sheikh Moustafa town in Idlib which caused material damages to the hospital and caused to go out of service.

On 25 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb next to the makeshift hospital in Al Zabadani in Damascus suburbs which injured some medical personnel and patients. The shelling caused material damages to the hospital.

#### **Residential Neighborhoods:**

##### **Markets:**

On 16 August 2015, government warplanes dropped a barrel bomb on the market in Daraa Al Balad in Daraa city which killed 8 individuals and damaged the commercial shops.

Educational Institutions:

##### **Schools:**

On 19 August 2015, government warplanes dropped a barrel bomb on Mer'ee Al Tawab School in Palmyra city that is under ISIL's control in Homs suburbs. As a result, a woman was killed and the school was partially damaged.





On 20 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on one of the schools in Al Hawash town in Hama suburbs which caused partial damage to the school's building.

### **Houses of Worship:**

#### **Mosques:**

On 2 August 2015, government warplanes dropped a barrel bomb next to one of the mosques in Al Tamania'a town in Idlib which caused great material damages to the mosque's building.

On 5 August 2015, government aviation dropped a barrel bomb next to Al Moustafa Mosuque in Dayara which caused great material damage to it and caused it to go out of service.

On 7 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on Al Jisr Al Kabeer mosque in Al Zabadani city that is under the control of armed opposition groups in Damascus suburbs. The mosque was greatly damaged and its minaret was almost destroyed completely. It is worth noting that the mosque used to be a church but it was transformed to a mosque during the Umayyad period.

On 15 August 2015, government aviation dropped 3 barrel bombs on Baseema town that is under the control of armed opposition forces in Damascus suburbs which killed 8 individuals and caused partial damages to the mosque.

On 16 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb next to Al Rahman mosque in the eastern neighborhood in Palmyra in Homs which caused material damages to the mosque and its minaret.

On 19 August 2015, government helicopters dropped a barrel bomb on the Fourkan mosque in Homs suburbs that is under ISIL's control which almost destroyed the mosque completely.

On 22 August 2015, government warplanes dropped another barrel bomb for the second time on Al Jisr Al Kabeer Mosque in Al Zabadani city that is under the control of armed opposition groups in Damascus suburbs which burned the mosque and partially destroyed it. Also it went out of service.

### **Infrastructure:**

#### **Power Stations:**

On 1 August 2015, government forces intensified its artillery and aviation shelling in an attempt to gain its control back on Zayroun Power Station in Hama suburbs. The power station was burned as a result.

On 9 August 2015, a government helicopter dropped a barrel bomb on the Thermal Station in Al Safeera city that is under ISIL's control in Aleppo city. The station was damaged and the city suffered from power outage as a result.

On 20 August 2015, government helicopters dropped another barrel bomb on the Thermal Station in Al Safira city in Aleppo eastern suburbs. As a result, the city suffered from power outage and the cooling tower was damaged.





#### IV. Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. The Syrian government has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council resolution 2139 and used barrel bombs in a widespread and systematic manner. Furthermore, the Syrian government perpetrated the crime of murder in a widespread and systematic manner according to Article VII of The International Criminal Court Rome Statute. Additionally, it violated many principles of the international humanitarian law and perpetrated tens of crimes that can be classified openly as war crimes through its indiscriminate and proportionate bombing.
2. SNHR notes that the bombing using explosive barrels is an act of indiscriminate bombing that targeted armless civilians, thus the government forces and its militias have violated the articles of the international law for human rights which guarantee the right to live. Furthermore these violations were perpetrated during a non-international armed conflict and hence can be absolutely classified as war crimes.
3. The random attacks committed by the government forces are considered violations of the customary international law considering the fact that government forces have attacked residential areas rather than a specific military target.
4. These attacks, especially aerial bombing, have caused immeasurable humanitarian and material losses. There are strong indicators that prove that the damage was deeply severe compared to the expected military advantage.
5. The magnitude of this wide systematic frequent bombing, the level of its excessive strength, its military nature, and the coordinated approach of these attacks must be based on high orders, and a state policy.
6. Government forces, and all of its leaderships and forms, are responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes as well as any parties that support the Syrian government politically, materially, and militarily – such as the Russian government, the Iranian government, and Hezbollah in addition to the weapon manufacturing companies. All of these parties must be prosecuted for the crimes they perpetrated, or contributed to, against the Syrian people.

#### The Security Council

1. The Security Council should take serious steps in order to implement its resolutions which have become ineffective and thus lost all of its credibility and purpose.
2. Also, it should impose an arms embargo on the Syrian government and prosecute anyone who supplies the Syrian government with money and weapon considering that those resources are being used to perpetrate crimes and serious human rights violations.
3. The Security Council is the party who has the authority to refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court. Instead of preserving peace and security, the Security Council is hindering this step. Everyone responsible for war crimes and crimes against must be prosecuted.







## VI. Annexes and Attachments:

*Video footages and images that document the use of barrel bombs by government forces in August 2015:*

A [video](#) footage that depicts the shelling aftermath that was caused by government's use of barrel bombs on Al Bara town in Idlib governorate on 24 August 2015.

An [image](#) that depicts the location of one of the shelled barrel bombs that was dropped by government forces on Daraya city in Damascus suburbs on 7 August 2015:

An [image](#) that depicts the smoke columns that resulted after the shelling with barrel bombs on the thermal station in the suburbs of Al Safeera city in Aleppo suburbs that is under ISIL's control on 9 August 2015.

An [image](#) that depicts the location of a shelled barrel bomb on Al Hawash town in Hama suburbs on 20 August 2015.

An [image](#) that depicts the fire that resulted after the shelling with a barrel bomb on Al Jisr Al Kabeer in Al Zabadani city in Damascus suburbs, on 22 August 2015, that is under the control of armed opposition groups.

An [image](#) that depicts the location of a shelled barrel bomb on Ma'art Al No'aman city in Idlib suburbs on 22 August 2015.

An [image](#) that depicts an unexploded barrel bomb dropped by government aviation on Um Al Mayazen town in Daraa suburbs on 27 August 2015.

An [image](#) that depicts the location of a shelled barrel bomb on Um Al Mayazeen town in Daraa suburbs on 27 August 2015.

### Acknowledgments

Our most profound condolences go out to the victims' families and friends and our thanks to the local activists and families who contributed majorly to this report.



An [image](#) that depicts the destruction that occurred to the minaret of Al Jisr Al Kabeer mosque in Al Zabadani city in Damascus suburbs that is under the control of armed opposition groups after a barrel bomb was dropped on the mosque on 7 August 2015.

