

**Human Rights Council****Fifty-seventh session**

9 September–9 October 2024

Agenda item 4

**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention****Report of the Independent International Commission of  
Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic\*, \*\****Summary*

During the period under review, 1 January to 30 June 2024, humanitarian needs were at their highest since the start of conflict. Civilians were killed and injured in ongoing hostilities, including attacks amounting to war crimes, across several frontlines.

Lawlessness prevailed across a fragmented country, with predatory forces using violence and threats to extort money from civilians, rather than ensuring their protection and the rule of law. Arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances and deaths in detention continued. The killings in Dar'a on 7 April illustrated how areas recaptured by the Government also remained marked by continuous violence.

Attacks by Da'esh increased markedly. Heightened regional tensions resulting from the conflict in Gaza led to intensified military operations. Israeli air strikes targeting Iranian officials and proxies across the Syrian Arab Republic increased, as did Iranian-affiliated groups' attacks on bases of the United States of America, sparking fear of further regional escalation.

\* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

\*\* The annexes to the present report are circulated as received, in the language of submission only.



## I. Mandate and methodology

1. The present report, of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (hereinafter the Commission),<sup>1</sup> covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2024. It is based on 385 interviews, conducted in accordance with the established methodology and practices of commissions of inquiry and human rights investigations. The Commission also requested information on incidents and developments,<sup>2</sup> and analysed, authenticated and verified documents, photographs, videos and satellite imagery from multiple sources, including non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.<sup>3</sup>

2. The standard of proof was met when there were reasonable grounds to believe that incidents had occurred as described.<sup>4</sup> When the Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that conduct entailing individual criminal responsibility has occurred, it attributes it to a party to the conflict where possible.

3. The Commission's investigations remained hampered by denial of access to the country and by protection concerns relating to interviewees, and also by the United Nations regular budget liquidity crisis. Guided by the principle of "do no harm", interviewees are not named, but the Commission thanks all who provided information, particularly victims and witnesses.

## II. Political, military and humanitarian developments

4. The Syrian Arab Republic remains mired in a complex humanitarian crisis in which civilians continue to be killed and injured during hostilities, State and non-State actors exercise power arbitrarily and commit violations with impunity, and six foreign militaries remain engaged.<sup>5</sup> Concurrently, the economic and humanitarian situation has continued to degenerate, amid corruption, organized crime, unilateral coercive measures and economic isolation, predominantly affecting ordinary Syrians rather than the elite.

5. Reports of drug smuggling, human trafficking, limited government services, and increasing lawlessness in government-controlled areas also continued. Predatory security forces and factions used violence, detention and threats to extort money from civilians, rather than ensuring protection and the rule of law (see sects. III.A and V.B below). Security sector restructuring efforts were perceived as an attempt to centralize power further and assert government control over key security institutions. Parliamentary elections in government-controlled areas in July<sup>6</sup> were not expected to alter the political or military trajectory of the country.

6. Internationally, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria continued to push for urgent de-escalation and a nationwide ceasefire, the reconvening of the Constitutional Committee, and step-by-step confidence-building measures moving forward. However, efforts to implement Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) remained stalled.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Commissioners are Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro (Chair), Hanny Megally and Lynn Welchman.

<sup>2</sup> The Commission addressed requests for information to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex IV, to date no reply has been received), to other parties to the conflict and to other Member States and is thankful for the responses received and other exchanges.

<sup>3</sup> Including nine of the Government's periodic identical letters to the Secretary-General and others, sent between January and June 2024.

<sup>4</sup> For example, [A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1](#), paras. 7–10; and [A/HRC/19/69](#), para. 10.

<sup>5</sup> While the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic controls approximately 70 per cent of the territory, supported by Russian, Iranian and other foreign forces, non-State armed groups control significant amounts of territory and population centres in the north and north-west of the country, while three foreign States – Israel, Türkiye and the United States of America – each retain effective control over parts of Syrian territory (see annex II). Jordan carried out air strikes.

<sup>6</sup> <https://sana.sy/en/?p=334619>.

<sup>7</sup> [https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-07-22\\_secco\\_un\\_special\\_envoy\\_for\\_syria\\_mr\\_geir\\_o\\_pedersen\\_briefing\\_as\\_delivered\\_.pdf](https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-07-22_secco_un_special_envoy_for_syria_mr_geir_o_pedersen_briefing_as_delivered_.pdf).

7. Humanitarian funding dwindled amid competing regional and global crises, with just 20 per cent of the 2024 humanitarian response plan funded by July.<sup>8</sup> This is despite approximately 13 million people facing acute food insecurity and over 650,000 children showing signs of stunting from severe malnutrition, while nine out of ten Syrians live below the poverty line.<sup>9</sup> Cross-line convoys were repeatedly denied across the country, depriving communities of life-saving aid, including in the Rukban camp.<sup>10</sup> On 8 July 2024, the Government extended its approval for cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid through the Bab al-Hawa crossing until 13 January 2025, though it was briefly closed by Türkiye following demonstrations in the north of the Syrian Arab Republic in early July 2024.<sup>11</sup>

8. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in a recent report, described how unilateral coercive measures resulted in humanitarian organizations facing increased costs in their procurement and delays in delivery of goods and financial transactions due to complex compliance assessments relating to unilateral coercive measures.<sup>12</sup> It recommended concrete action to limit overcompliance and chilling effects and to enable simplified financial transactions for humanitarian organizations.

9. Fighting between pro-government and anti-government armed groups caused civilian casualties along the Idlib frontline, albeit on a lesser scale than during the previous reporting period's escalation (see sect. III.D below). At the same time, attacks by Da'esh<sup>13</sup> reportedly increased and were on track to double in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic for 2024.<sup>14</sup> Both the United States of America and the Russian Federation reportedly conducted counter-Da'esh operations in the north-east and in central areas of the country respectively, in support of their local and State partners (see sect. III.B below). In the north-east, Türkiye conducted strikes in January and May in areas held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)<sup>15</sup> (see sect. VI.A below), while air strikes widely attributed to Jordan struck alleged drug traffickers in December 2023 and January 2024 (see sect. III.A below).

10. Though the Syrian Arab Republic has long been a proxy battleground for larger regional conflicts, this period also saw an increase in reported attacks involving State and reportedly proxy actors on and from Syrian territory, in parallel to the devastating conflict in and around Gaza. Between October 2023 and February 2024, Iranian-affiliated militias attacked United States bases in the region, including more than 100 times in the Syrian Arab Republic, reportedly leading to United States military casualties in Jordan.<sup>16</sup> The United States retaliated with air strikes resulting in casualties among alleged Iranian-backed militias in the east of the Syrian Arab Republic.<sup>17</sup> Israeli air strikes also increased, with dozens

<sup>8</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/mr-ramesh-rajasingham-director-coordination-division-unocha-behalf-ms-joyce-msuya-acting-usg-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-briefing-security-council-humanitarian-situation-syria-22-july-2024?utm\\_source=rw-subscriptions&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=country\\_updates\\_226](https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/mr-ramesh-rajasingham-director-coordination-division-unocha-behalf-ms-joyce-msuya-acting-usg-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-briefing-security-council-humanitarian-situation-syria-22-july-2024?utm_source=rw-subscriptions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=country_updates_226).

<sup>9</sup> <https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/transcript%C2%A0press%C2%A0stakeout%C2%A0united-nations-special-envoy%C2%A0syria-mr-geir-o-pedersen-following>.

<sup>10</sup> [https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-06-25\\_secco\\_un\\_deputy\\_special\\_envoy\\_for\\_syria\\_ms\\_najat\\_rochdi\\_briefing\\_as\\_delivered.pdf](https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-06-25_secco_un_deputy_special_envoy_for_syria_ms_najat_rochdi_briefing_as_delivered.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2024/07/1132491>.

<sup>12</sup> [https://uneswa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/dynamics-effects-measures-syrian-arab-republic-english\\_1.pdf](https://uneswa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/dynamics-effects-measures-syrian-arab-republic-english_1.pdf), pp. 10 and 26. See also [S/2023/419](#), para. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Da'esh remained a terrorist entity as per Security Council resolution 2253 (2015); see also [A/HRC/54/58](#), paras. 25–29.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/3840981/defeat-isis-mission-in-iraq-and-syria-for-january-june-2024/>.

<sup>15</sup> [A/HRC/46/54](#), para. 12. Türkiye considers SDF to be connected to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.stateig.gov/uploads/report/highlight\\_pdf\\_file/oir\\_q2\\_mar2024\\_brief\\_508.pdf](https://www.stateig.gov/uploads/report/highlight_pdf_file/oir_q2_mar2024_brief_508.pdf) and <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3659809/3-us-service-members-killed-others-injured-in-jordan-following-drone-attack/>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3665642/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-us-strikes-in-iraq-an/>.

targeting Iranian officials and proxies across the Syrian Arab Republic.<sup>18</sup> These, and particularly the 1 April attack on an Iranian consular office in Damascus<sup>19</sup> (see sect. III.C below), sparked fear of further regional escalation.

11. Despite ongoing violence, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and lack of political progress, Syrian civilians and civil society demonstrated their resilience through continued advocacy and demonstrations for their rights across the country, with State and non-State authorities using violence to repress challenges to their governance. Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment as well as murder and executions continued in areas controlled by all duty bearers and form part of the repressive environment employed by such actors to retain political dominance.

12. In Suwayda', protesters have been demanding economic, social and political reforms for almost a year (see sect. III.A below). Since February, Syrians have been protesting against practices by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)<sup>20</sup> in the north-west, including torture and death in detention (see sect. IV.A below). Protests also took place in the north-east in late May against measures by the self-administration<sup>21</sup> to decrease the price of wheat, affecting livelihoods (see sect. VI.B below).

13. In more positive developments, the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic began its crucial work, with which the Commission stands ready to cooperate.<sup>22</sup> The fourth periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>23</sup> was finally presented to the Human Rights Committee, with the Government's delegation participating in the review including through written and oral responses to the Committee's list of issues and questions.<sup>24</sup>

14. Concurrently, accountability efforts in third-party jurisdictions continued, with arrests of suspects in Germany and Sweden for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in 2012 to 2014, reportedly related to the Yarmouk camp. In the United States, a former director of Adra Prison and Security Committee chief in Dayr al-Zawr was arrested for immigration irregularities linked to alleged torture and ill-treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic. Separately, a court in France convicted the former heads of the National Security Bureau, the Air Force Intelligence Directorate and the Mezzeh branch of Air Force Intelligence of war crimes and crimes against humanity in absentia and issued life sentences.

### **III. Violations in government-controlled areas and pro-government forces' attacks in the north-west**

15. Life in government-held areas continued to be marked by deteriorating living conditions and risk of arbitrary detention and related violations, against the backdrop of chronic insecurity and unrest in the south of the Syrian Arab Republic and ongoing military operations in the north-west.

<sup>18</sup> For example, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-regarding-the-hamas-israel-war/february-24-pr/english-statement-by-idf-spokesperson-regarding-the-idf-s-efforts-on-the-northern-border/> at minute 8.17.

<sup>19</sup> <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22181.doc.htm> and [A/78/838-S/2024/281](https://www.un.org/press/en/2024/sgsm22181.doc.htm).

<sup>20</sup> HTS remained a terrorist entity as per Security Council resolution 2170 (2014); and see [A/HRC/46/54](https://www.un.org/press/en/2024/sgsm22181.doc.htm), para. 7, footnote 13.

<sup>21</sup> [A/HRC/45/31](https://www.un.org/press/en/2024/sgsm22181.doc.htm), para. 12.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/turk-briefs-un-general-assembly-independent-institution-missing-persons-syria>.

<sup>23</sup> [CCPR/C/SYR/4](https://www.un.org/press/en/2024/sgsm22181.doc.htm).

<sup>24</sup> [CCPR/C/SYR/CO/4](https://www.un.org/press/en/2024/sgsm22181.doc.htm) and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2024/07/experts-human-rights-committee-welcome-syrias-cooperation-united-nations-refugee>.

## A. Detention, including torture, enforced disappearance and death in detention

16. Civilians continued to be arbitrarily detained by the State security apparatus for peacefully expressing views on social media.<sup>25</sup> A civil servant was detained in the coastal area for a social media post supportive of the Suwayda' protestors. Months later, his whereabouts remained unknown. He was reportedly dismissed from his government position. Another man was detained by the Ladhqiyyah criminal security branch following a similar social media post. Both men were charged under the 2022 cybercrime law for allegedly "undermining the prestige of the State".

### Torture, including sexual and gender-based violence

17. Torture and ill-treatment in government custody continued, including of Syrians who had been deported to the Syrian Arab Republic and of men who had previously evaded conscription or deserted from military service. A deserter who fled the Syrian Arab Republic early in the conflict was deported back to the country in mid-2023 and detained for around three months in several security branches. At Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) branch 235 ("Palestine Branch"), the man was held for ten days along with eight others in a cell designed for solitary confinement, was repeatedly beaten with plastic pipes during interrogation, and was deprived of sleep, with prison guards pouring cold water on detainees at night. When he sought medical care for his injuries he was denied treatment, and was beaten by the guards. Another deserter from Dar'a, deported in 2024, appeared emaciated and ill-treated, having lost some 40 kgs, when relatives visited him at Sednaya Military Prison, following his transfer there from MID branch 235.

18. In continuation of a well-documented pattern,<sup>26</sup> two detainees, including a deserter, were subjected to rape and other sexual and gender-based violence in late 2023 and early 2024. While in MID custody, one deserter was repeatedly raped with a stick, and electric shocks were applied to his genitals during interrogation. Another man, held in an overcrowded cell with around 80 others, was beaten with various items and suspended by his limbs for prolonged periods (*shabeh*),<sup>27</sup> in addition to being beaten and burnt with cigarettes, including on his genitals, during interrogation.

### Lack of fair trial guarantees

19. One former detainee charged with violating the cybercrime law reported how he had been denied a lawyer, forced to sign documents during interrogation, and prevented from speaking. The investigating judge ignored visible injuries resulting from torture.

20. During 2024, detention survivors and their relatives described how lawyers and other intermediaries, including State agents, had demanded large sums of money to secure the detainee's transfer, release, right to be visited in detention, or inclusion in an amnesty. Payments were, however, no guarantee that the outcome sought would be achieved. Meanwhile, unsubstantiated security reports filed by unknown people continued to result in both arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances.

21. The arbitrariness and lack of independence of the judicial system led some to seek violent recourse. In two separate cases, family members first sought to obtain the release of arbitrarily detained young adults from Suwayda' through intermediaries. When this failed, they engaged local Suwayda' militias, who in turn abducted Syrian security force members, leading to an eventual swap and release of all involved without further judicial review.

<sup>25</sup> A/HRC/55/64, paras. 56–66; and A/HRC/54/58, para. 34; and <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/A-HRC-53-CRP5.docx>.

<sup>26</sup> A/HRC/46/55, paras. 15, 20 and 21.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/A-HRC-53-CRP5.docx>, para. 4.

### **Death in detention and enforced disappearances**

22. While new cases of death in State custody came to light, secrecy surrounding detention by the security apparatus continued<sup>28</sup> to hamper families' efforts to discover the fate of their relatives, often compelling them to pay significant sums to unreliable intermediaries.

23. The family of a peace activist who went missing in February 2014 following a government raid on his home in Rural Damascus obtained a death notification through the civil registry a decade later, in 2024, indicating that he had died in detention in 2014, less than a month after his arrest. In another case, a "reconciled" fighter<sup>29</sup> and media activist was detained by MID during a raid on his house in Dar'a in 2023. Family members visited him in Sednaya Military Prison two months after the arrest. After the prison administration reportedly cancelled a subsequent visit planned for late 2023 without explanation, a government-affiliated intermediary informed them that the man had died in detention.

24. A lawyer held in the custody of the Hasakah city police died in May after the police reportedly rejected a request by local tribal leaders for a transfer to a suitable medical facility. The body was returned to the family, but the authorities failed to clarify the circumstances of the death.

25. In cases where official death notices were issued, often years after the stated date of death, no mortal remains nor details explaining the circumstances of the death were provided to families.

26. The Commission also documented cases of former detainees for whom official death notifications had been issued although they were still alive. Such cases create uncertainty for the families of missing persons provided with death notices, who as a result often refuse to acknowledge the death in the absence of mortal remains. It was unclear whether the documented cases of incorrect official death notifications stemmed from deliberate acts or from administrative mistakes, which are not uncommon. In one example, a family recently discovered that a misspelling of their detained relative's name had led State officials to initially deny holding the person in their custody, raising concerns that other detainees had gone missing for similar reasons.

### **Findings**

27. Notwithstanding that certain crimes and offences are well defined within existing Syrian legislation, a substantial portion of the counter-terror framework and of political and State security crimes, including provisions of the anti-cybercrime law, are so vaguely defined that they induce substantial risk of arbitrary detention and conviction. In detaining persons for the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms, and forcibly disappearing detainees, the Government has engaged in arbitrary detention. The Government has also violated the right to a fair trial.

28. The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that the Government continued to commit acts of torture and ill-treatment against persons in State custody, including practices causing death in detention, as well as arbitrary imprisonment, rape or other forms of sexual violence of similar gravity, and enforced disappearances, again confirming continuing patterns of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

## **B. Insecurity, including clashes and attacks**

### **Armed clashes in Dar'a**

29. The situation in Dar'a<sup>30</sup> remained marked by unrest and high levels of insecurity, with mutual attacks between pro-government forces and opposition armed groups in western

<sup>28</sup> [A/HRC/55/64](#), para. 56.

<sup>29</sup> Former opposition fighters recruited since 2018 by government security forces through State-led so-called "reconciliation" processes: see [A/HRC/42/51](#), para. 68; and [A/HRC/36/55](#); sect. III.A.1.

<sup>30</sup> [A/HRC/54/58](#), para. 23.

Dar'a, assassinations, attacks with improvised explosive devices, drug trafficking, increased Da'esh presence,<sup>31</sup> and ongoing security operations by pro-government forces.

30. On 8 January, dozens of members of pro-government forces, comprising fighters from the Eighth Brigade of the Syrian Arab Army, including "reconciled" fighters, attacked an opposition leader's home in a residential area in Al-Yadudah. Troops surrounded the town early in the morning and raided several houses amid intense shooting, including with large-calibre ammunition, killing at least two civilians and injuring at least two others, including an elderly woman. Several injured people were reportedly prevented from being transported to hospital until dusk.

31. On the morning of 7 April, more than 100 pro-government fighters targeted an armed opposition group leader during raids on at least three houses in Sanamayn. Ten civilians – seven men, a woman and two children – were killed in the attack. The woman was beaten and shot more than 20 times in front of her children. One attacker reportedly attempted to rape women. Nine fighters were also killed, including two child fighters affiliated with the armed opposition group. Testimonies and authenticated photographic and video materials indicate that most victims were executed with knives and close-range gunshots. Some fighters, including a child, were executed after they were captured. The attackers desecrated and mutilated many bodies after death. Following the attack, they looted houses before setting them on fire, burning three civilians alive – two children and one man.

32. A pro-government faction reportedly linked to MID and comprising "reconciled" fighters acknowledged responsibility for the attack, stating that it had been conducted in retaliation for an improvised explosive device incident that reportedly had killed seven children in the same town on 6 April. The attackers were masked, were dressed in dark uniforms, and in some cases chanted or scrawled slogans associated with Da'esh ideology, according to witnesses and authenticated video. The Ninth Division of the Syrian Arab Army, deployed approximately 50 metres from the houses that were raided, did not intervene during the attack, and the Commission is not aware of any investigation by the Government into the incident.

33. Six years after the Government's recapture of Dar'a, these incidents illustrate how the area remains marked by continuous violence and vigilantism, absence of the rule of law, and resurgent violent extremism.

34. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the 8 January attack amounted to a direct attack on civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. The 7 April raid included acts amounting to murder and outrages upon personal dignity. These acts may amount to war crimes. Furthermore, the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 by non-State armed groups is prohibited.<sup>32</sup> In the case of children under 15, this may amount to a war crime.

#### **Attacks in the central areas of the Syrian Arab Republic**

35. Attacks continued in the Badia desert in the centre of the country, where Da'esh and pro-government groups, including Iranian-backed militias, are reportedly present. Some attacks against pro-government forces were claimed by Da'esh, to which aerospace forces of the Russian Federation responded with air strikes. Other attacks, as yet unclaimed, targeted civilians gathering lucrative desert truffles, yet again. Dozens of civilians, including women and children, were also reportedly killed or maimed by landmines or the detonation of unexploded ordnance.

36. On 6 March, a group of civilians with a small National Defence Forces escort was attacked in the Badia as they were gathering truffles in the Kabajib area, in the south-west of Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. A group of around ten armed men shot and killed two civilian drivers and set 13 vehicles on fire.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/POSTURE-STATEMENT/>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children>.

37. Two weeks later, on 21 March, a group of 17 civilians were attacked by armed men riding motorbikes, while gathering truffles in the Badia, south-east of the city of Raqqah – killing one, injuring at least two, and abducting six other civilians. The same day, four men, including three National Defence Forces fighters, disappeared while searching for the abductees. Over the next few days, civilians, accompanied by National Defence Forces members, reportedly retrieved the four men’s bodies, and the bodies of the six abductees near the location of the initial attack.

38. While no party claimed responsibility for the 6 March and 21 March attacks in the Badia, if perpetrated by a party to the conflict, such acts may amount to the war crime of murder.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Peaceful protests in Suwayda’**

39. Anti-government demonstrations in Suwayda’ Governorate continued to be held regularly, mostly without violent incidents. However, on 28 February, an estimated hundred protestors, including women and elderly people, who had gathered in front of a government building in Suwayda’ city centre, confronted government security forces, who fired into the air, apparently to disperse the protesters. A protestor was killed and another injured by stray bullets. Witnesses and verified footage indicate that the protestors were unarmed during the incident.

40. On 23 June, a delegation of peaceful protestors reportedly demanded the removal of a newly established Syrian Arab Army checkpoint at the northern exit from Suwayda’. Later that evening, clashes erupted between government forces and local militias, with reported use of light weapons and shelling, injuring a civilian. Investigations into this and other recent violent incidents<sup>34</sup> are ongoing.

#### **Air strikes in Suwayda’**

41. The Royal Jordanian Air Force attacked several border areas in Suwayda’ Governorate in January, reportedly to counter increased drug and weapons smuggling,<sup>35</sup> causing civilian casualties on three occasions. On 5 January, an air strike hit a water well near Oumm al-Roumman village, south of Suwayda’, killing a civilian guarding the facility, while another air strike hit the house of an alleged drug smuggler near the village of Al-Shaab without causing casualties. On 9 January, air strikes hit the villages of Arman, Al-Shaab and Al-Malah, killing an elderly couple in Al-Shaab and another civilian in Al-Malah. During the night of 18 to 19 January, air strikes struck at least two residential areas in Arman, killing 10 civilians, including two girls and five women. Air strikes reportedly caused the temporary displacement of thousands of civilians.

42. On 23 January, the Syrian Arab Republic expressed “deep regret”<sup>36</sup> at “air strikes by the Royal Jordanian Air Force on several villages and areas inside Syrian territory”, stating that the 18 January attack had “killed a number of people” in Suwayda’. The same day, Jordan stated that “the smuggling of drugs and weapons across the Syrian border into Jordan is a threat to national security” and must be addressed.<sup>37</sup> Digital forensic analysis of the pictures of remnants are consistent with munitions used by the Royal Jordanian Air Force in previous attacks.

43. The air strikes of 5, 9 and 19 January on residential areas and civilian objects in Suwayda’ Governorate may have constituted the use of excessive force employed arbitrarily

<sup>33</sup> A/HRC/54/58, para. 30.

<sup>34</sup> [https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-07-22\\_secco\\_un\\_special\\_envoy\\_for\\_syria\\_mr\\_geir\\_o\\_pedersen\\_briefing\\_as\\_delivered.pdf](https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-07-22_secco_un_special_envoy_for_syria_mr_geir_o_pedersen_briefing_as_delivered.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Notably captagon – see [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Iraq/Iraq\\_regional\\_dynamics\\_report\\_2024.pdf?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Iraq/Iraq_regional_dynamics_report_2024.pdf?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email), pp. 11 and 12. See also <https://web.archive.org/web/20240105105145/https://www.almamlakatv.com/news/133314--مصدر-ل-المملكة-الاردن-نفذ-غارتين-جويتين-داخل-سوريا-ملاحقة-مهرب-مخدرات>

<sup>36</sup> <https://sana.sy/?p=2035048> (in Arabic).

<sup>37</sup> <https://x.com/ForeignMinistry/status/1749843289036001775>.



and disproportionately in violation of the right to life.<sup>38</sup> Since these attacks may also have a nexus to the armed conflict, and given the absence of military objectives, such attacks may also amount to directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects, in violation of international humanitarian law.

### C. Impact of the conflict in Gaza

44. Amid heightened regional tensions resulting from the ongoing conflict in Gaza, military operations increased in several parts of the Syrian Arab Republic (see sect. II above). These included three likely Israeli attacks in densely populated residential areas, causing civilian casualties.

45. On 7 February, air strikes hit the city of Homs and the surrounding countryside, killing several Lebanese Hezbollah fighters as well as at least two civilians – a civilian woman and a male pharmacist – when a residential building located in the Hamra neighbourhood near Homs al-Balad Stadium was hit. No party claimed responsibility for the attack, which the Syrian Arab Republic attributed to Israel.<sup>39</sup>

46. The following month, further air strikes hit several locations in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, killing a United Nations aid worker on 26 March, as a missile hit a building allegedly occupied by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps elements adjacent to his house in the Al-Qusoor neighbourhood in Dayr al-Zawr city.<sup>40</sup> Air strikes also hit residential areas in Al-Boukamal – including a building near Al-Maari School reportedly used by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for military activities, and a target near Badr Hospital. The Government attributed the strikes to Israeli forces, and Israeli official media reported that Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps bases in the east of the Syrian Arab Republic used for smuggling weapons had been targeted.<sup>41</sup>

47. On the afternoon of 1 April, an air strike hit a building rented by the Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran adjacent to the Embassy in the Mezzeh residential area of Damascus, reportedly killing 16 people, including seven senior Iranian military advisers and two civilians, and injuring others.<sup>42</sup> The Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran attributed the attack to Israel.<sup>43</sup>

48. In the above-mentioned incidents, while the attacks appeared directed at military objectives, they nevertheless raise concerns regarding respect for the principles of precaution and proportionality under international humanitarian law.

### D. Pro-government forces' attacks on the north-west

#### Ground attacks by the Syrian Arab Army

49. The escalation in late 2023<sup>44</sup> continued early into 2024, with multiple attacks, of which the Commission investigated 12 that caused civilian casualties. Government forces often deployed imprecise weapons in densely populated urban centres, killing and injuring civilians. Civilians were also targeted with guided weapons while harvesting crops, with agricultural vehicles being hit, continuing a previously documented pattern.<sup>45</sup>

50. In response to an attack by HTS on the towns of Nebbel and Zahra', in government-controlled areas, which reportedly killed a pregnant woman, her young daughter

<sup>38</sup> A/HRC/54/58, paras. 22 and 31.

<sup>39</sup> A/78/769-S/2024/148 and <https://sana.sy/?p=2041009>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://syria.un.org/en/264411-statement-un-resident-coordinator-and-humanitarian-coordinator-syria-adam-abdelmoula-killing>.

<sup>41</sup> A/78/845-S/2024/285 and <https://www.kan.org.il/content/kan-news/defense/729135/>.

<sup>42</sup> <https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/statement-attributable-united-nations-special-envoy-syria-mr-geir-o-pedersen-attack-diplomatic> and <https://en.mfa.gov.ir/portal/newsview/743404>.

<sup>43</sup> A/78/845-S/2024/285 and A/78/838-S/2024/281.

<sup>44</sup> A/HRC/55/64.

<sup>45</sup> A/HRC/52/69, para. 27; and A/HRC/51/45, para. 41.

and her father-in-law, and injured two other civilians, government forces heavily shelled residential areas of Darat Izzah on 1 January. Three men were killed and another was injured. The same day, government forces shelled the villages of Burj Haydar and Kabashin, west of Aleppo, reportedly in response to attacks by Faylaq al-Sham. Two men were killed and a 6-year-old boy lost his leg after a shell exploded in their garden in Burj Haydar. One woman was killed and six other civilians, including two women and two young girls, were injured by shelling in Kabashin. Witnesses reported a drone in the sky at the time.

51. Also in this context, during the afternoon of 6 January, government forces, likely based in Saraqib, fired one artillery shell that landed outside a park in the south of the city of Idlib, where children were playing. An 18-month-old girl was killed and a woman was injured. Witnesses reported a drone in the sky at the time. Government forces fired at least seven 122 mm 9M22 Grad rockets carrying incendiary cluster submunitions at the city of Idlib later that day; no civilian casualties were reported but a factory was destroyed after catching fire. The following day, government forces fired cluster munitions at the city of Idlib, injuring a civilian man and a girl and damaging a building.

52. On the evening of 16 January, government forces in Saraqib fired at least eight 122 mm 9M22 Grad rockets with standard warheads at Ariha, destroying at least one house, damaging a hospital and a local business and displacing residents. Two men were killed, and six civilians were injured, including two girls, aged 7 and 12.

53. Government forces attacked a van transporting children home from Qur'an school, likely with a rocket, on 10 March, near Darat Izzah. A 12-year-old-boy was killed, and five people, including four children, were injured, and the vehicle was destroyed. Reportedly, the same van had been transporting the children on a daily basis for a month, and on that day, three children had been dropped off minutes before the attack. A drone was seen in the sky.

54. The following month, government forces, likely based in Saraqib, attacked Sarmin with two waves of 122 mm 9M22 Grad rocket fire on 1 April. The first wave did not cause civilian casualties, but the second wave, of at least eight rockets, killed a woman and two girls, and injured nine people, including four children and two women. An injured girl had her leg amputated. Houses, a school and a market were damaged.

55. Government forces, likely from the Forty-sixth Regiment, targeted the village of Ebzemo on the evening of 5 May with a single artillery shell. A 12-year-old boy was killed and his mother was seriously injured, causing her leg to be amputated.

56. Two children aged 7 and 9 were killed and a baby seriously injured near Kafr Nuran on 28 May when government forces, likely from the Forty-sixth Regiment, fired a 9M133 Kornet anti-tank guided missile at an agricultural vehicle parked outside a civilian house, destroying it. Three days later, on 1 June, government forces fired a 9M133 Kornet anti-tank guided missile, destroying a stationary agricultural vehicle close to Kafr Nuran, in the middle of the day. Hours later, another 9M133 Kornet anti-tank guided missile hit a pickup truck near Atarib, killing two farmers and a boy.

#### **Attack by aerospace forces of the Russian Federation**

57. One documented Russian air strike resulted in civilian casualties. On the morning of 29 February, aerospace forces of the Russian Federation carried out four air strikes on a furniture factory, in a rural area west of the city of Idlib. Two aircraft took part in the attack, using eight missiles. At least one missile hit the factory and three others hit surrounding land. One civilian was killed, and another five, including a child, were injured. Parts of the factory were destroyed. Information collected, including visual material, suggests that it was a civilian building. Following the attack, however, the authorities of the Russian Federation issued a statement that it had attacked terrorist bases west of Idlib.

## Findings

58. For each of the incidents mentioned above, the Commission sought but did not receive evidence of military objectives located in the immediate vicinity of the attacks.<sup>46</sup>

59. In the attacks on Darat Izzah, Burj Haydar and Kabashin on 1 January, on the city of Idlib on 6 January, on Ariha on 16 January, on Sarmin on 1 April and on the village of Ebzemo on 5 May, there are reasonable grounds to believe government forces carried out indiscriminate attacks that killed or injured civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law. Such attacks may amount to war crimes. In regard to the attacks in Kafr Nuran on 28 May, near Atarib on 1 June and near Darat Izzah on 10 March, there are reasonable grounds to believe government forces carried out direct attacks in violation of international humanitarian law. Such attacks may amount to war crimes.

60. In firing cluster munitions at densely populated areas in the city of Idlib on 6 and 7 January, in continuation of a pattern observed since 2012,<sup>47</sup> there are reasonable grounds to believe that government forces committed an indiscriminate attack in violation of international humanitarian law. The 7 January attack that killed or injured civilians may amount to a war crime.

61. Aerospace forces of the Russian Federation may have failed to take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law, in relation to the 29 February air strike.

## IV. Violations by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in the north-west

62. Starting in February, unprecedentedly large protests, led by civilian activists and supported by military and religious figures, spread across HTS areas. Protestors called for the release of political and security detainees, for governance and socioeconomic reforms and for the removal of HTS leader Abu Mohammad Al-Julani. Demonstrations were triggered by reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees by the HTS general security service, following months of arrest campaigns by HTS targeting their own members, as well as members of other armed groups and political parties, such as Hizb al-Tahrir. Mr. Al-Julani publicly acknowledged the use of “prohibited and severe means of pressure on the detainees” and reportedly pledged to investigate and to hold those responsible accountable. While demonstrations initially unfolded peacefully, with little or no interference, HTS later began using force, assaulting and arresting protestors.

### A. Unlawful deprivation of liberty, and torture and ill-treatment

63. HTS detained men, women, and children as young as seven. They included civilians detained for criticizing HTS and participating in the demonstrations, as well as victims of crime arrested for attempting to pursue justice through its “salvation government”<sup>48</sup> courts.

64. During the reporting period, methods of torture – including *shabeh*, *dulab* and beatings with pipes, cables and sticks – were documented in the following detention facilities: Harem prison, prisons in Sarmada including the courthouse prison and Hakim prison (C-11 branch), Al-Dana police station, the HTS criminal security branch, and the prosecutor’s office building in the city of Idlib.

65. Detainees held in Harem prison in 2023 were subjected to *shabeh* and beatings, in one case resulting in a fractured arm. A female former detainee described how she had been hung upside down for three hours to pressure her to confess, and had witnessed a fellow detainee’s injuries following severe beatings. Pregnant women, women with small children, and girls were also reportedly detained in Harem prison.

<sup>46</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>47</sup> A/HRC/55/64, para. 39; A/HRC/52/69, para. 25; and A/HRC/22/59, para. 21.

<sup>48</sup> A/HRC/39/65, para. 60.

66. Former detainees detained in Hakim prison in 2023 and 2024 were blindfolded and handcuffed during interrogations and beaten, including with cables and sticks. Three former detainees were held in solitary confinement, including for periods of five and three months. A woman described visiting her relative in Sarmada prison in 2023 who had bruises on his face and a dislocated arm.

67. A former detainee released in 2024 from the Sarmada courthouse prison described a dedicated room in the prison where detainees were tortured. He reported being subjected to *dulab* and frequently beaten, including as punishment for talking to other detainees. A civilian man was flogged after being sentenced to more than 50 lashes by a judge in Sarmada criminal court in 2023. Children, some appearing as young as 7, were detained in a separate cell and distributed food to other prisoners.

68. A former armed group member detained in Al-Dana police station for several months, after publicly criticizing the HTS arrest and detention campaign, described how he had been blindfolded and beaten with a green pipe during interrogation. Another detainee held there for a week without charge in 2024 reported being beaten in the face during interrogation.

69. A former detainee held in the HTS criminal security branch described how he had been detained for long periods of time in solitary confinement over two years in different locations before being released in 2024. He said that he had been interrogated daily at the criminal security branch in the city of Idlib and had been subjected to *shabeh* and *dulab*.

70. A man detained in the prosecutor's office building in the city of Idlib and released in 2024 described how he had been beaten with a green pipe and a car engine belt and had had his fingers broken and nails removed in an attempt to elicit a false confession. He had also been subjected to *dulab* and *shabeh*. He had been hung by his arms and tied up overnight until dawn, dislocating his shoulder. A fellow detainee suffered permanent physical injuries due to severe beatings.

71. Overall, detainees were held in dark, humid and cramped conditions, including in Harem central prison, Hakim prison, a detention facility in Jisr al-Shughur, Al-Dana Police Station, the criminal security branch of HTS in Idlib, and the Sarmada courthouse prison. Detainees described limited food in Al-Dana police station, the HTS criminal security branch, Hakim prison and Harem prison. In one case, food deprivation had been used as a punishment in the Sarmada courthouse prison, and denial of medical attention and of medication was reportedly used as punishment in Sarmada prison. Children, including girls, were detained with adults, including women detainees, in Al-Dana Police Station and in the Hakim, Harem and Sarmada prisons.

72. Fair trial guarantees were lacking. All detainees accused in security-related cases documented by the Commission were barred from legal representation. Civilians were brought before "salvation government" military courts. In several cases, detainees were not aware whether they had been convicted or what their sentence was. Two detainees reported being ordered by a judge to fingerprint documents, not being able to put forward a defence and not having a lawyer. Another detainee was informed that she had been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, without ever appearing before a court. In several instances, detainees' releases were conditional on signing pledges not to oppose or criticize HTS.

73. In another development, a proposed new public morality law circulated widely in local media in January. The draft law would seek to further restrict women's access to public spaces and employment and would establish a public morality police with powers to arrest and detain. If adopted, it would have a significantly detrimental impact on fundamental freedoms in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic.

## **B. Executions and deaths in detention**

74. Four executions of detainees by HTS were documented. Three men were former fighters and one was a civilian; all were accused of security-related offences. Before their executions, they were all detained in the Sheikh Bahr and Harem prisons and had regular communication with relatives which stopped abruptly without explanation. All four detainees were executed in November 2023, after varying periods of detention. Relatives made

repeated unsuccessful attempts to obtain information about their detained family members from HTS and the “salvation government”. Around March, a dedicated office for providing information about detainees was set up, reportedly in response to the demonstrations. In March and April, HTS and the “salvation government” confirmed the executions, in one case issuing a death certificate. None of the bodies of those executed were handed over to their families. In two instances, HTS/“salvation government” personnel stated that their bodies had likely been buried in mass graves.

75. In these and other documented cases of people sentenced to death, the detainees were not legally represented and the judicial proceedings were surrounded by secrecy. A former detainee who escaped from a HTS prison recalled: “I was detained. I thought I would be detained for one or two months. But I was later informed I was facing a death sentence.”

76. Numerous allegations were received regarding the execution of other civilians, including women, reportedly as punishment for adultery, prostitution and murder. Investigations are ongoing.

77. Among those detained during the above-mentioned HTS arrest campaign in 2023 was a Jaish al-Ahrar armed group member suspected of spying. He was in good health at the time of his arrest, following which HTS authorities withheld information on his location. On 24 February, after being informed by an HTS member, Jaish al-Ahrar members exhumed his body from a grave near the Sheikh Bahr prison. He had reportedly died on 7 June 2023 due to torture and ill-treatment. Following the public outcry over his death, HTS and Jaish al-Ahrar formed a joint judicial committee which cleared him of all charges. This committee found that his “confession” had been obtained under torture. In a rare case of compensation for thousands of deaths in custody in the Syrian Arab Republic, the committee agreed that HTS would pay a sum equivalent to \$60,000 in compensation for the victim’s family.

### **Findings**

78. The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that HTS members continued to commit acts of torture and cruel treatment, as well as passing sentences and carrying out executions without a previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all judicial guarantees which are generally recognized as indispensable.<sup>49</sup> These acts may amount to war crimes. Furthermore, there are reasonable grounds to believe that HTS members may have committed acts tantamount to enforced disappearance.

## **V. Violations in the northern Aleppo and Ra’s al-Ayn areas**

79. These areas saw occasional shelling along the frontline by pro-government forces and Kurdish-led armed groups. In this context, on 6 March, the frontline village of Al-Sayid Ali was targeted by mortar shells fired from the east where both Kurdish-led armed groups and pro-government forces were reportedly present. One shell killed a woman and injured her neighbour as they sat outside a house. Following the attack, fighting in surrounding areas reportedly continued for two days.

80. Arrest, violence and financial extortion by Syrian National Army (SNA) military police and certain factions, notably the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade (SSSB) and the Sultan Murad Division, also continued. Kurdish and Arab women and men arriving in SNA areas from government- or self-administration-controlled areas were routinely summoned by the military police and kept in custody until they were cleared, or tried in SNA military courts for alleged terrorism offences or for links with SDF.

<sup>49</sup> [A/HRC/52/69](#), para. 81; [A/HRC/44/61](#), para. 96; and <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/A-HRC-53-CRP5.docx>.

## A. Unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture, ill-treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence

81. During the reporting period, methods of torture including *shabeh* and beatings with pipes and cables were documented in the following detention facilities: the military police in Afrin and Jarablus, the civilian police in Mabrukah in Ra's al-Ayn, SSSB-controlled places of detention in Sheikh Hadid and Afrin, the Sultan Murad-controlled places of detention in Hawar Killis and I'zaz, and the Al-Maasara prison in the I'zaz district which is under the control of Al-Jabha al-Shamya.

82. Men and women detained by the military police in Afrin in 2023 and 2024 were hung in the *shabeh* position, beaten and slapped. A Kurdish man held there between 2018 and 2024 was hit repeatedly with a heavy pipe while handcuffed and blindfolded during interrogation. An Arab woman who was released in 2023, after four years, was beaten with cables and placed in the *shabeh* position by the military police in Jarablus. On one occasion, she was brought to another location and interrogated by a Turkish officer. While the Turkish officer questioned her about alleged ties to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an Arab man in uniform slapped her in the face. A Kurdish woman, also released from detention in 2023, was similarly slapped during interrogation by the civilian police in the town of Mabrukah in Ra's al-Ayn.

83. At the SSSB headquarters in Sheikh Hadid in 2023 and 2024, detainees were severely beaten with cables and iron pipes during interrogation. A Kurdish man described how both of his legs were tied to an iron pipe and held down while he was beaten repeatedly with a green plastic pipe. Another Kurdish detainee was severely beaten as he lay on the floor, leaving him barely able to stand. A Sultan Murad Division leader beat an Arab detainee with cables while he was hanging in the *shabeh* position during interrogation. Other detainees were also hung in the *shabeh* position, were electrocuted and suffered serious physical injuries.

84. In the Hawar Killis prison in I'zaz, a detainee released in late summer 2023 was beaten by Sultan Murad Division members, resulting in scarring.

85. A 15-year-old Kurdish boy, detained by Al-Jabha al-Shamya and released in 2023, was reportedly beaten on the head and back during interrogation and was held in solitary confinement in his underwear in the cold.

86. Reports also continued of sexual and gender-based violence committed in SNA detention facilities, including by the military police in Afrin between 2018 and 2022. These incidents are under investigation.

87. Overall, interviewees continued to report deplorable detention conditions, in overcrowded cells without proper mattresses or blankets, and with poor hygiene and limited access to food and medical care – affecting also children detained alongside their mothers. Detainees reported having to pay money to the guards to access adequate food or to contact their families.

88. Many were held incommunicado, including a 15-year-old Kurdish boy held incommunicado for two and a half years. Several families came to know about the fate of their relatives only when they were asked for money to secure their release – with some families paying thousands of dollars to the military police via intermediaries.

89. Those detained by the military police were typically held in pretrial detention before eventually being brought before a judge, while those arrested by individual SNA factions were held without charge. Lawyers reported that confessions obtained under duress were sometimes held admissible by judges, particularly in the military justice system – with detainees bearing visible signs of torture still seeing their concerns dismissed by judges. An Arab woman accused of association with PKK recalled being accused of lying by a military court judge when she described being tortured by the military police.

### **Death in detention**

90. An Arab man arrested in December 2023 and detained by SSSB in a Sultan Murad Division facility in Bulbul, Afrin district, died in detention, reportedly as a result of torture and ill-treatment. Upon his arrest, he was reportedly interrogated by SSSB, initially in the presence of Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) officers who then left the facility, regarding his alleged involvement in the abduction of a Kurdish man. Subsequently, the man's whereabouts were unknown to his family, until 1 February, when it was announced that his body had been brought to the Afrin military hospital. In a video circulated on social media and verified as authentic, a civilian Turkish doctor informed a crowd that about 20 days earlier, MIT had informed him that a body would be brought to the hospital – which it later was – by masked men. Following a public outcry, SSSB issued a public statement denying its involvement in the man's death.

91. On 25 April, two men detained by Al-Jabha al-Shamya on suspicion of involvement in an improvised explosive device attack in I'zaz on 31 March, in which three civilians were killed and five were injured, were shot and killed when their convoy was reportedly attacked by unidentified armed men during their transfer to the custody of the military police in I'zaz. Local authorities stated that they were investigating the incident.

### **Ain al-Bayda camp**

92. Syrian and foreign nationals, including women and children, allegedly affiliated with Da'esh, were still being held in a camp in Ain al-Bayda village, near Jarablus, Aleppo, constructed and supplied by the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and guarded by Syrian men in military uniform with dogs. Foreign nationals held in the camp are reportedly awaiting repatriation efforts by their countries of origin. Turkish officials regularly visited the camp. The camp reportedly houses more than 500 people, held in a section for women and children and a separate section for men, all of whom are not permitted to leave. Some women have been held there since 2019. The camp lacks medical facilities, with those requiring medical attention reportedly receiving treatment outside, under armed guard.

### **Rape and sexual violence outside of detention facilities**

93. Two cases of sexual violence by SNA members occurring outside of detention facilities during previous reporting periods were investigated. A Kurdish woman and former Women's Protection Units (YPJ) member attempting to travel to Türkiye in 2022 was gang-raped in a location controlled by a local armed SNA faction, by a SNA member and other men. She reported how her ex-husband prevented her from seeing her daughters when he heard that she had been raped, and she felt powerless to challenge him due to the stigma of her rape. Another Kurdish woman was sexually assaulted in her home in Afrin by a Sultan Murad Division member in 2023 who threatened to kill her family members.

### **Accountability efforts**

94. Alongside efforts to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the killing in 2023 of a prominent activist and his wife, convictions were secured for the killing of four Kurdish men in Jinderes during Nowruz.<sup>50</sup> While it is positive that SNA is holding its members accountable, the death sentences issued are concerning, even though they will reportedly not be carried out.<sup>51</sup>

95. SNA also gave information about other ongoing investigations and prosecutions, including in cases of previously reported alleged deaths in detention, and property-related crimes (see paras. 98 and 99 below).

96. Following public outrage over a rapid investigation into the death of a prominent women's rights activist found dead in her home in Bza'a, Aleppo Governorate, on 27 February, deeming it a suicide, the case was reopened for further investigation. Prior to

<sup>50</sup> A/HRC/54/58, para. 75.

<sup>51</sup> Syrian law requires approval from the Head of State for executions.

her death, she had been forced to resign from her position as a local council member and had been subjected to a campaign of threats and intimidation by unknown people – raising fear among other women’s rights activists calling for gender equality who have been subjected to similar campaigns by private and armed actors.

#### **Findings**

97. The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that SNA military police and SSSB, Sultan Murad and Al-Jabha al-Shamya factions arbitrarily deprived individuals of liberty, and held detainees incommunicado, some in a manner tantamount to enforced disappearance. SNA members also committed torture, cruel treatment and rape; which may amount to war crimes.

### **B. Property confiscation**

98. In continuation of a previously reported pattern, SSSB confiscated landowners’ and homeowners’ property and imposed exorbitant “taxes” on the civilian population.<sup>52</sup> In several documented cases, those who resisted the demands of SSSB were detained and subjected to violence. A Kurdish landowner had to pay more than \$8,000 to SSSB in three “tax” demands in a matter of months. Another Kurdish man, returning from government-controlled areas to Afrin, faced significant challenges in recovering his property and land from Suqur al-Shamal and his home remains occupied by people associated with the faction. Attempts to seek accountability through the police and courts were unsuccessful.

99. Also in Afrin, Faylaq al-Sham seized and built on land belonging to a Kurdish landowner, denying him use of the land since 2018. The faction has subjected the landowner to a campaign of physical violence, threats, harassment and financial extortion.

#### **Findings**

100. The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that SSSB, Suqur al-Shamal and Faylaq al-Sham have engaged in pillage. These acts may amount to war crimes.

## **VI. Violations in the north-east**

101. Unrest in eastern Dayr al-Zawr and hostilities between Türkiye and SDF continued to negatively impact civilians in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, while unlawful deprivation of liberty and recruitment of underaged fighters persisted.

### **A. Conduct of hostilities and insecurity**

#### **Insecurity and unrest in eastern Dayr al-Zawr**

102. While, on the whole, the hostilities that erupted in August 2023 between SDF and a group of tribal fighters<sup>53</sup> reduced, reports of sporadic clashes and security raids by SDF in eastern Dayr al-Zawr continued, amid deeply entrenched grievances.<sup>54</sup>

103. On 15 May, a boy was shot in the head and killed as he was swimming near an SDF checkpoint in Dernaj village, eastern Dayr al-Zawr. In the same village, on 22 May, following a dispute between a group of civilians and SDF members, a dozen SDF and Asayish fighters opened fire on the crowd, killing two boys and injuring four civilians. The following month, SDF raided a house in Dhiban, detained a man, beat him on the head with guns, and took him to a detention facility in the Al-Omar oil fields. Later the same day, his dead body was delivered to a relative, with wounds suggesting he had been tortured.

<sup>52</sup> A/HRC/55/64, paras. 83–85.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., para. 90.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., para. 91.



104. While SDF evacuated some schools that their forces had previously occupied since August 2023, at least seven schools remained<sup>55</sup> occupied in the Suheil, Abu Hamam and Hawayij areas, reportedly depriving thousands of pupils of education. Some schools evacuated by SDF remained unfit for educational purposes, due to damage or theft. Some community members perceived the failure to rehabilitate and reinstate education as a retaliatory measure for their perceived support for fighters opposing SDF.

### Findings

105. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the incidents in May and June mentioned above violated international humanitarian law and may amount to the war crime of murder.

106. By continuing the use of schools for military purposes in the above-mentioned circumstances, SDF is violating its own 2020 policy<sup>56</sup> on the military use of schools.

### Air strikes

107. Air strikes hit military and civilian targets on 25 December 2023.<sup>57</sup> One hit a medical complex in Ayn al-Arab (Kobane), including a diabetes clinic, interrupting services for at least two weeks. Another destroyed a medical oxygen plant in Qamishli and damaged a nearby dialysis clinic. Medical staff reported the death of one dialysis patient due to the resulting delay in obtaining treatment. Other civilian facilities affiliated with the self-administration were also hit, including a warehouse in Qamishli, killing seven civilians, including a woman, and injuring three others. A video issued by Turkish State media of its operations in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic showed several targets hit on 25 December 2023 by Turkish air strikes, including the warehouse.<sup>58</sup>

108. The power station in Swediyah, Hasakah Governorate, was hit anew<sup>59</sup> by Turkish air strikes on 15 January. The attack destroyed the station's remaining turbines, exacerbating restrictions on access to electricity and reportedly affecting access to water, fuel and other essential services for more than 1 million people.<sup>60</sup>

109. A series of air strikes hit several locations in Hasakah Governorate on 31 May, causing both SDF and civilian casualties, as tensions mounted between Türkiye and the self-administration following the latter's stated intention to hold local elections. At around 6 p.m., as people gathered to extinguish a fire ignited by a strike on an SDF checkpoint near Tal Hamis village earlier that day, a new air strike injured seven civilians, including two boys and a woman.

110. On the same day, at around 5 p.m., a farm in Al-Hatimiya village, near Qamishli, was hit. Two Kurdish Red Crescent ambulances marked with protective emblems were dispatched to the area, where first responders found two men dead. At around 6:40 p.m., two consecutive air strikes hit the vicinity of the farm again, damaging one of the ambulances and injuring one of the first responders.

111. Witnesses told the Commission that they had seen or heard a drone over both the Tal Hamis area and the Al-Hatimiya farm prior to the impact.

### Findings

112. International humanitarian law obliges parties to an armed conflict to consider reasonably foreseeable indirect effects of an attack,<sup>61</sup> particularly for the purposes of the rules on proportionality and precautions. In the absence of information on the concrete and direct

<sup>55</sup> A/HRC/55/64, para. 92.

<sup>56</sup> <https://sdf-press.com/en/2020/07/military-instructions-issued-by-the-general-command-of-the-syrian-democratic-forces/>.

<sup>57</sup> A/HRC/55/64, paras. 98 and 99.

<sup>58</sup> <https://x.com/trthaber/status/1739651380481273943?s=09&mx=2>.

<sup>59</sup> A/HRC/55/64, para. 99; and A/HRC/52/69, para. 112.

<sup>60</sup> <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15602.doc.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> [https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irc\\_97\\_901-9.pdf](https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irc_97_901-9.pdf).

military advantage anticipated from launching the 15 January attack,<sup>62</sup> given the cumulative civilian harm that resulted, there are reasonable grounds to believe that it was disproportionate and may amount to a violation of international humanitarian law. Similarly, in the absence of military targets identified in the immediate vicinity of the facilities hit,<sup>63</sup> the above-mentioned aerial attacks on 25 December 2023 on civilian facilities in Ayn al-Arab (Kobane) and Qamishli appear to be direct attacks against civilian objects or amount to a failure to take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm, in violation of international humanitarian law.

113. The air strikes of 31 May fit the pattern of drone attacks by Turkish forces.<sup>64</sup> The strike that hit an ambulance marked with a protective emblem may constitute a direct attack on medical personnel or objects. Such attacks may amount to war crimes. The attack that injured civilians may amount to a failure to take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm, in violation of international humanitarian law.

## **B. Unlawful deprivation of liberty**

### **Detention on political grounds**

114. Against a backdrop of continued political tensions and planned local elections, SDF and the Asayish continued to detain civilians, including political activists perceived as opposed to the Democratic Union Party or the self-administration. In early April, a Kurdish political activist opposed to the Democratic Union Party was detained and beaten in Malikya by the Asayish. The same day, a journalist was detained in Ma'badah by masked gunmen allegedly affiliated with SDF. A day later, another journalist was detained in Rumaylan after his car was stopped by Kurdish-speaking masked men in military fatigues who took him to an unknown location. One month later, an activist opposed to the Democratic Union Party was detained at a checkpoint in Amuda manned by SDF. The same day, two adolescents who some months beforehand had organized a 10-year commemoration of the killing of several anti-Democratic Union Party activists were detained in Amuda by the Asayish on their way back from school. All remain detained incommunicado at the time of writing.

115. The Commission also received reports that several premises of political parties deemed opposed to the de facto authorities had been attacked and set on fire between March and May, including an office of a Kurdish political party in central Qamishli, set on fire by a group of masked men around midnight on 24 April. The Asayish have yet to investigate the incident.

116. Following farmers' protests in Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates in late May against a decrease in wheat prices set by the self-administration, several civilians were reportedly detained, with reports of intimidation and violence during protests, allegedly by local security forces. Investigations are ongoing.

117. An Assyrian activist detained by SDF since November 2023 in the context of an anti-Da'esh operation went missing in April after local authorities denied that he was in their custody, contradicting previous statements.<sup>65</sup>

### **Detention for suspected affiliation with Da'esh**

118. More than five years after the territorial defeat of Da'esh, almost 44,000 people,<sup>66</sup> including around 27,000 children and 13,600 women, remained interned without legal review in the Al-Rawj and Al-Hawl camps for their alleged affiliation with Da'esh, in appalling conditions, described in the Commission's recent report entitled "Punishing the innocent:

<sup>62</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> [A/HRC/55/64](#), para. 103.

<sup>65</sup> <https://sdf-press.com/en/2023/11/anti-isis-operation-one-isis-terrorist-captured-in-al-hasaka-city/>.

<sup>66</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/un-resident-coordinator-and-humanitarian-coordinator-syria-adam-abdelmoula-concludes-visit-al-hasakeh-enar?utm\\_source=rw-subscriptions&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=country\\_updates\\_226](https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/un-resident-coordinator-and-humanitarian-coordinator-syria-adam-abdelmoula-concludes-visit-al-hasakeh-enar?utm_source=rw-subscriptions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=country_updates_226).

ending violations against children in northeast Syria”.<sup>67</sup> The Commission welcomes the release and repatriation of at least 2,600 people since the beginning of the year, and urges these efforts to be intensified. The above-mentioned air strikes on the power plant in Swediyah further restricted access by the Al-Rawj camp’s residents to electricity.

119. At least 9,050 foreigners,<sup>68</sup> including former fighters and other men and boys allegedly affiliated with Da’esh, continued to be held in various facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, some allegedly incommunicado since 2019. Reports indicate that they continue to be held in overcrowded cells, with insufficient food and health care amid a severe tuberculosis outbreak. Some families of European men had not received information on their relatives’ whereabouts since at least January 2022, and requests to the self-administration about their whereabouts went unanswered. Other families reported having received proof of life in recent months.

120. Some 8,400 Syrian nationals, including minors, have been convicted by the self-administration-run “People’s Defence Courts” for their alleged involvement in Da’esh crimes. An estimated additional 2,000 Syrian men are also reportedly being held. Following the announcement of a new amnesty by SDF on 17 July, around a hundred Syrian prisoners were reportedly released days later, with more releases expected.<sup>69</sup>

#### **Missing Yazidi women and children**

121. Ten years since the attack on Sinjar that launched the genocide perpetrated by Da’esh,<sup>70</sup> an estimated several thousand<sup>71</sup> missing Yazidi women and children remain unaccounted for, including an unknown number that might still be held in the Al-Hawl camp, alongside their tormentors. Local non-governmental organizations seeking to facilitate the repatriation and family reunification of Yazidis faced considerable challenges in finding missing enslaved Yazidi women and their children, often born out of forced marriage, as well as in combating the stigma that they face in their home community in Iraq.

#### **Findings**

122. The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that SDF continues to arbitrarily deprive individuals of their liberty, including some who are detained incommunicado and others in a manner tantamount to enforced disappearance. The prolonged blanket internment since 2019, without individual or regular review, of some 44,000 people in the Al-Hawl and Al-Rawj camps amounts to unlawful deprivation of liberty, with conditions in both camps possibly amounting to cruel or inhuman treatment. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the form, severity, duration and intensity of the physical and mental suffering inflicted may amount to the war crime of committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, in relation to each interned individual.

123. By holding men and boys allegedly affiliated with Da’esh without access to adequate health care, SDF is violating the obligation to treat humanely all individuals who do not – or who no longer – take part in hostilities.<sup>72</sup> Such treatment constitutes a violation of the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, which may amount to a war crime.<sup>73</sup> Member States involved in supporting SDF have a particular responsibility to assist them to bring these violations to an end.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coisyria/policypapersieges29aywar/2024-03-18-punishing-innocent.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> [https://media.defense.gov/2024/May/02/2003455786/-1/-1/1/OIR\\_Q2\\_MAR2024\\_FINAL\\_508.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2024/May/02/2003455786/-1/-1/1/OIR_Q2_MAR2024_FINAL_508.PDF), p. 28.

<sup>69</sup> <https://sdf-press.com/en/2024/07/our-sdf-general-command-meets-with-the-representatives-of-northern-syria-components/>.

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/ColSyria/A\\_HRC\\_32\\_CRP.2\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/ColSyria/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 205.

<sup>72</sup> A/HRC/51/45, para. 101.

<sup>73</sup> A/HRC/40/70, para. 92; A/HRC/48/70, para. 116; and A/HRC/52/69, para. 121.

<sup>74</sup> Common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949; and A/HRC/52/69, para. 121.

### **Violence in detention facilities of the Syrian Democratic Forces**

124. In late March, riots erupted in two prisons run by the self-administration in Raqqah, in which men and boys were reportedly held in overcrowded cells. Unrest reportedly began during a sit-in held with the aim of denouncing alleged ill-treatment, restrictions in accessing medical care, corruption and the delayed release of detainees who had served their term. As cells were set on fire in an alleged escape attempt, prison guards, the Asayish and SDF responded with gunfire, killing at least five detainees and injuring at least eleven. The use of deadly force in the context of detention raises concerns regarding the international humanitarian law prohibitions of cruel treatment and violence to life including murder. Investigations are ongoing.

### **C. Child recruitment**

125. Children were reportedly increasingly recruited in areas controlled by SDF, despite an action plan signed with the United Nations.<sup>75</sup> They included two girls and three boys aged from 12 to 17 recruited by the Revolutionary Youth between December 2023 and April 2024 in Qamishli, Ayn al-Arab (Kobane) and Manbij. A 15-year-old girl, recently released by the YPJ after she had been abducted along with a relative in late 2023, recalled being terrified during her recruitment and training. After her release, relatives reported that they did not receive adequate support for her social reintegration and rehabilitation, illustrating the challenges faced in such cases.

126. In most documented cases, parents who sought help from the self-administration or SDF were unable to obtain information on the whereabouts of their abducted children, with some parents expressing fear of retaliation.

127. Recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 by non-State armed groups is prohibited and for those under 15 may amount to a war crime.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, SDF continued to breach its commitment to prevent recruitment of all children under 18 in the area under its control.

## **VII. Conclusions and recommendations**

**128. Thirteen years on, the Syrian Arab Republic remains fragmented, with predatory forces killing, maiming, detaining, torturing and looting with impunity. While primary responsibility for violations documented in the present report lies with the parties carrying out attacks or exercising control, including the States supporting them, the international community's failure to fully fund the humanitarian response, and to ensure that sanctions do not negatively impact it, compounds suffering.**

**129. Syrian resilience is evident in the continued demonstrations and advocacy described in the present report, which show that ordinary Syrians remain resolute in seeking a peaceful, rights-respecting and unified country. The erosion of respect for their basic rights must be halted. To that end, the Commission reiterates its past recommendations, and makes the following further recommendations.**

**130. To the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and all other parties to the conflict:**

**(a) Immediately cease all indiscriminate and direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to the civilian population; and conduct independent, impartial and credible investigations into incidents entailing civilian deaths and serious injuries in which their forces are implicated;**

<sup>75</sup> [A/78/842-S/2024/384](#), para. 214; <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/action-plans/>; and [A/HRC/55/64](#), paras. 115–118.

<sup>76</sup> [A/HRC/55/64](#), para. 118.

(b) Immediately cease torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual and gender-based violence, in all places of detention, and release all arbitrarily detained people;

(c) Immediately cease all forms of incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance and take all feasible measures to locate all those detained and/or disappeared, to establish their fate or whereabouts and to ensure communication with their families;

(d) Investigate all credible reports of murders and killings of civilians, including in places of detention;<sup>77</sup>

(e) Ensure that alleged perpetrators of war crimes and serious violations of human rights law are held accountable through fair trials;

(f) Respect, protect and promote the fundamental freedoms of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly, association and movement, as well as property rights, including of refugees and internally displaced persons;

(g) Facilitate unhindered access for impartial humanitarian, protection and human rights organizations to every part of the country, including all places of detention;

(h) Take forceful and effective action to end recruitment of children into armed forces;

(i) Proactively engage with the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic to share information on the missing and/or disappeared.

131. The Commission also reiterates its call for the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to immediately cease using cluster munitions in populated areas and to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

132. The Commission further calls upon Member States supporting or otherwise influencing parties to the conflict to ensure rights-respecting and law-compliant action by the parties they support, in line with their obligations under customary international humanitarian law and common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and other relevant treaties.

133. The Commission also recommends that Member States:

(a) Extend greater support to efforts to address the humanitarian needs of all Syrians;

(b) Urgently review the impact of sanctions on humanitarian actors and ordinary Syrians, including due to overcompliance, with a view to eliminating any negative effects;

(c) Ensure that any return is voluntary, safe, dignified, sustainable and without risk of irreparable harm on account of torture, ill-treatment or other serious breaches of human rights obligations;

(d) Repatriate nationals held in the north-east and in the Ain al-Bayda camp for alleged association with Da'esh, prioritizing with utmost urgency unaccompanied children so that they can be reunified with their extended families, and other children with their mothers, in accordance with the best interests of the child;

(e) Continue seeking accountability for crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, including through domestic investigations and prosecutions.

<sup>77</sup> Common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

# Annex I

## Map of the Syrian Arab Republic

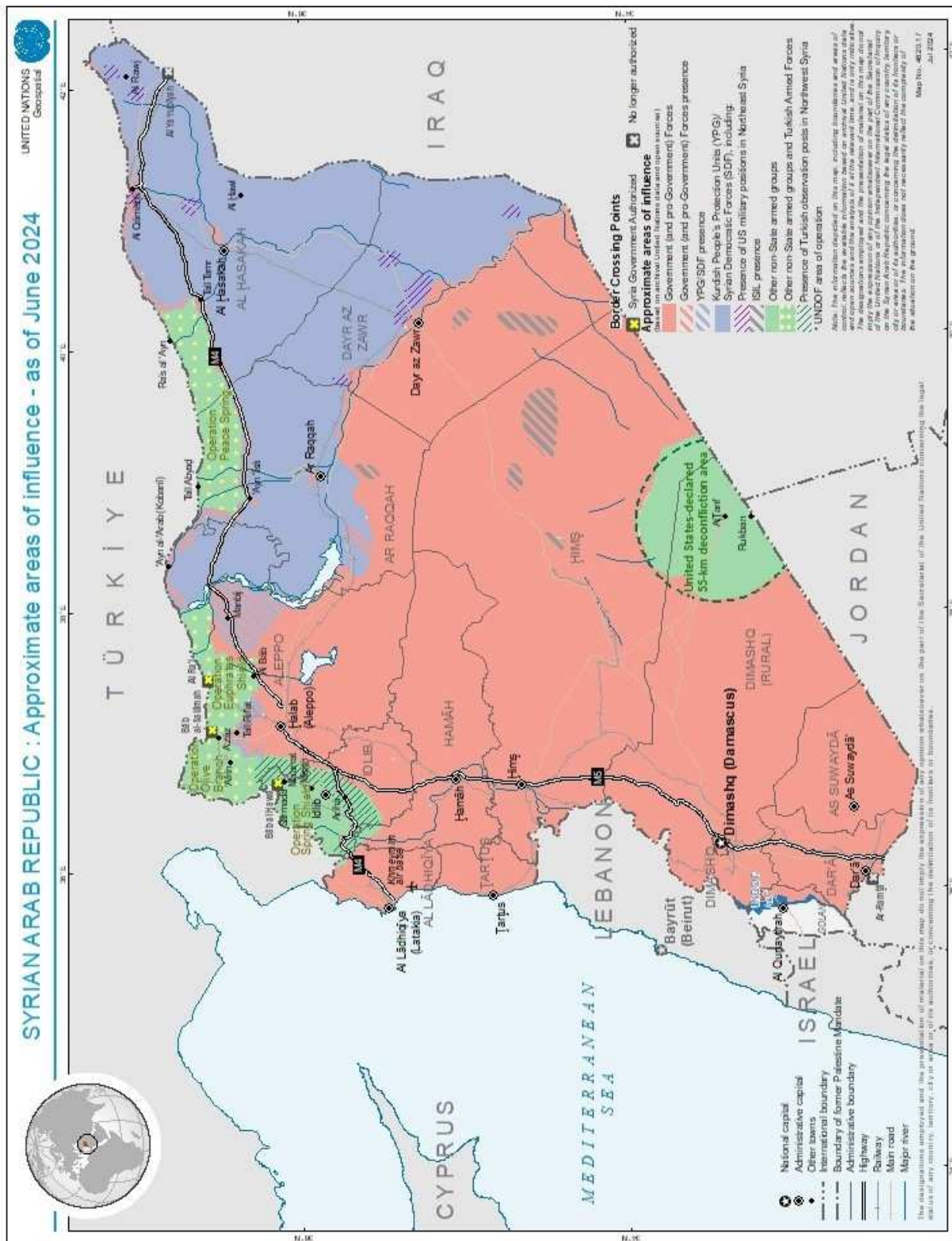


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Map No. 4204 Rev. 4 UNITED NATIONS  
August 2022

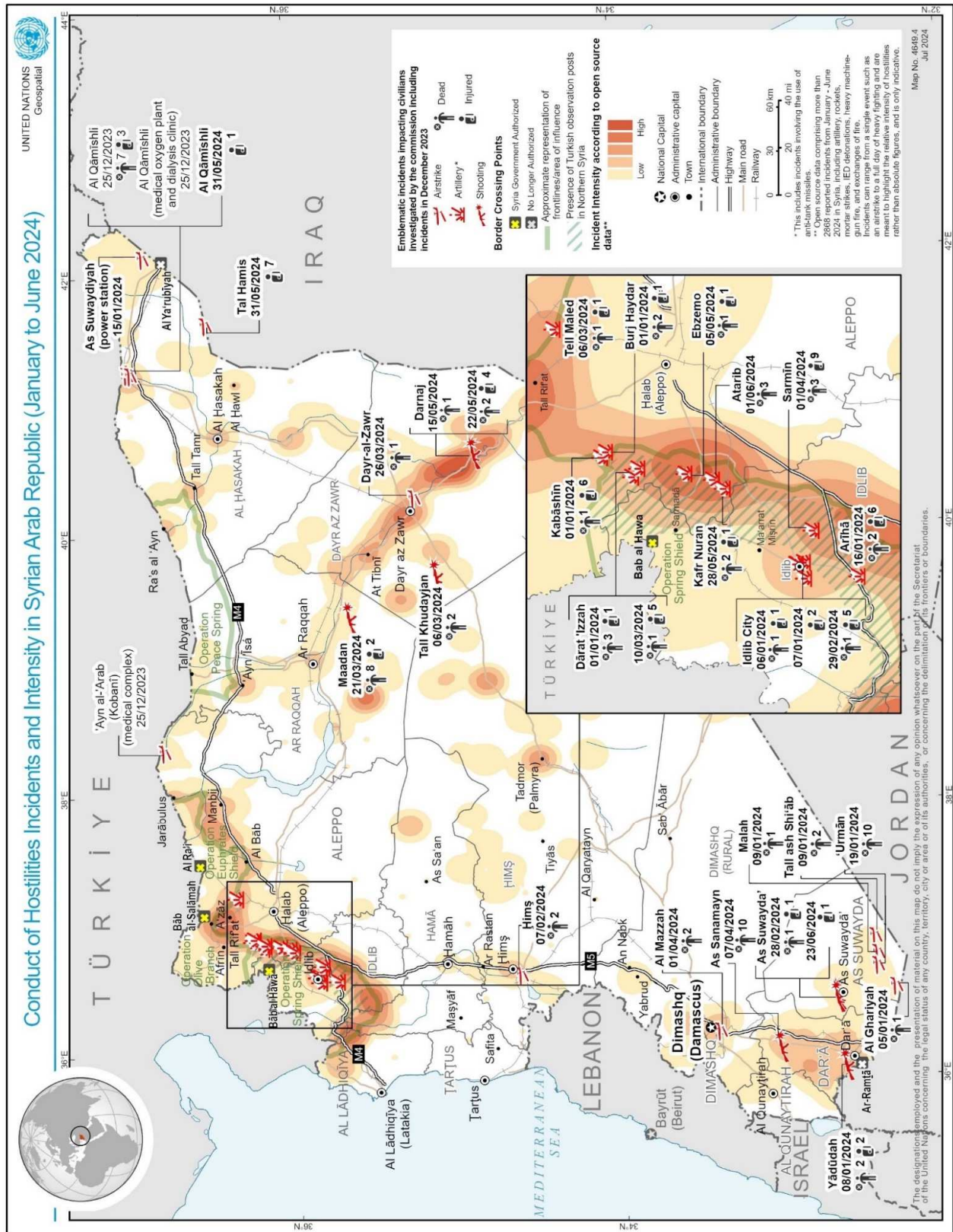
Annex II

Approximate Areas of Influence – June 2024



Annex III

Conduct of hostilities incident map





## Annex IV

## Correspondence with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic



### Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

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REFERENCE: COISYRIA/23/2024

The Secretariat of the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic presents its compliments to the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva and has the honour to refer to Human Rights Council resolution S-17/1 establishing the Commission “to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law since March 2011 in the Syrian Arab Republic”. It also refers to resolution A/HRC/55/22 (2024) adopted by the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 4 April 2024 extending the mandate of the Commission until 31 March 2025.

The Commission is currently conducting investigations for its upcoming report to the HRC’s fifty-seventh session in September 2024 which will cover events between 1 January and 30 June 2024. In this context, the Commission seeks information regarding incidents and events which allegedly occurred during this time period, which may have entailed violations and abuses of international human rights law since March 2011 in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In this regard, first the Commission requests any information your Government may be able to share regarding the incidents listed in the Annex to this note. The incidents listed include the following incidents in which your forces may have been involved, according to the information received:

- On 1 January 2024, alleged shelling killed three civilians and injured others in Darat Izza, western Aleppo.
- On 1 January 2024, alleged shelling killed three civilians and injured seven others, including three children in Burj Heidar and Kabashin, western Aleppo.
- On 6 January 2024, alleged shelling killed a child and injured a woman in Idlib city, Idlib governorate.
- On 16 January 2024, alleged shelling killed two civilians and injured six others in Ariha, Idlib governorate.
- On 10 March 2024, an alleged guided missile hit a vehicle killing a child and injuring five others in Darat Izza, western Aleppo.
- On 1 April 2024, an alleged missile killed one child in Sarmin, Idlib governorate.
- On 5 May 2024, alleged shelling killed a child and injured a woman in Ebizmo, Idlib governorate.

Furthermore, the Commission would welcome information concerning attacks and shelling by armed groups and other armed actors entailing civilian casualties in addition to the information provided on the aforementioned incidents in the Annex.

Second, the Commission continues to receive information regarding deaths in detention as well as torture in the Government of Syria's detention facilities, including within criminal and security branches and military prisons. The Commission would welcome any information on steps taken by the Syrian authorities to comply with the International Court of Justice's order for provisional measures issued on 16 November 2023, including measures taken to prevent acts of torture and ill-treatment and ensure that its officials and organizations or persons under its control do not commit such acts; and measures taken to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of any evidence related to allegations of torture and ill-treatment.

Third, the Commission would welcome any information regarding concrete steps undertaken by the Government to implement Legislative Decree No. 32 Abolishing Field Military Courts issued on 3 September 2023, including the transfer of cases under the jurisdiction of these courts to other courts, including the related consequences for detainees in a pre-trial phase. The Commission would also appreciate any information regarding the situation of those sentenced by such courts in the past following the Legislative Decree, including those sentenced to death.

Fourth, information has been obtained regarding the arrest and detention of civil society activists and citizens voicing criticisms of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in online fora including under the Cybercrime Law No. 20 of 2022. The Commission would be grateful for information and available data regarding cases of arrests, prosecutions, and convictions under this law since its enactment.

Fifth, the Commission has noted the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic of its report in response to the list of issues elaborated by the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/SYR/RQ/4). The Commission would appreciate receiving additional information regarding the following issues:

- a) The report mentions in paragraphs 5 and 11 that some members in Syrian military forces were presented to military courts in relation to acts committed during military operations, and that more than 400 complaints were received and processed by the State until 2023. The Commission would be grateful to receive additional information from the Government on the number of such cases, broken down per year since 2011, with details on the nature of offences committed, as well as the sanctions imposed by the Syrian judiciary.
- b) The report mentions in paragraph 36 that death sentences have been pronounced by the Syrian judiciary, and implemented, including in 2017 (19 death sentences pronounced, of which 3 were implemented), in 2018 (18 death sentences pronounced, 6 implemented), and 2019 (3 death sentences pronounced, none implemented). The report also notes that the names of detainees are made public (para. 38) and that all judicial proceedings, including military trials, are public otherwise legally void (para. 53). The Commission would be grateful to receive a list of cases of individuals sentenced to death between 2011 and 2024, including dates of arrest and date of the verdict, the names, age and gender of those convicted, the nature of offences allegedly committed, including the military or civil nature of such offences, and sanctions enacted by the State, including how sentences may have been mitigated on basis of amnesties when relevant. The Commission further seeks information regarding the number of individuals executed after being sentenced by a court in 2024, with breakdown per jurisdiction and gender, and information on steps undertaken by the Government to inform families of the death of their relatives and conduct restitution of the remains of the deceased.

In addition, regarding the information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Human Rights Committee in its fourth periodic report under article 40 of the ICCPR submitted on 29 December 2021 (CCPR/C/SYR/4), the report states that: "Members of the police force are held accountable if violent acts are committed during the investigation", and provides a table showing the number of police officers who have been held accountable for perpetrating violent acts during investigations or in prisons or detention centres between 2016 and 2020, and another table showing the number of officers held accountable for such acts in prisons and pre-trial detention centres (para. 39-40). As previously requested (COISYRIA/116/2023 dated 14 June 2023), the Commission would be grateful to receive updated statistics by the government for these two tables, for the years 2021 to 2024.

Seventh, the Commission is planning to issue a thematic report on violations of housing, land and property rights in the Syrian Arab Republic. In this context, the Commission would be grateful for information regarding (1) instances where properties of absentees (including internally displaced people and refugees), including agricultural lands and crops, have been either destroyed or stolen; (2) the nature of measures taken to prevent such destruction or theft and to protect housing,

land and properties of absentees; and (3) the nature of accountability measures undertaken against individuals allegedly involved in acts of stealing, looting and destruction of properties during the conflict, including Syrian Arab Army soldiers, other State officials or individuals affiliated to the State. The Commission would also appreciate any information regarding alleged violations of housing, land and property rights of absentees, including destruction, looting and stealing of absentees' properties in parts of the Syrian Arab Republic controlled by non-state armed groups.

Eighth, the Commission has received information that Syrians allegedly deported from Lebanon, including transferred detainees, have been detained in Syria after their return. The Commission would be grateful to receive further details regarding such cases, including the rationale for their detention, as well as regarding measures in place to ensure that national and international human rights standards are complied with in this context.

In order for the information to be received and processed ahead of its next reporting obligations, the Commission would kindly request that any inputs be received by 4 July 2024. We remain ready to discuss the most appropriate means by which to obtain the above information, including through meetings or briefings.

The Commission also takes this opportunity to reiterate its continued interest in the facilitation of a visit to the Syrian Arab Republic by your Government to fulfil its mandate, and to engage in dialogue concerning requests such as contained in the present communication. The Commission is also continuing to explore possibilities for visiting the northwest and the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic (as mentioned already e.g. in its letter dated 5 April 2023) and would welcome your Government's views.

For any questions regarding the details of this request or opportunities to collaborate, please contact the Secretariat, at [ohchr-coisyrria@un.org](mailto:ohchr-coisyrria@un.org) [ohchr-coisyrria@un.org](mailto:ohchr-coisyrria@un.org)

The Secretariat of the Commission of Inquiry avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 4 June 2024



L.A.

## Annex I

### List of alleged incidents on which the Commission requests information for its upcoming mandated report to the Human Rights Council session in September 2024

#### Attacks alleged to have occurred in Idlib governorate and western Aleppo

- On 1 January 2024, alleged shelling killed three civilians and injured others in Darat Izza, western Aleppo.
- On 1 January 2024, alleged shelling killed three civilians and injured seven others, including three children in Burj Heidar and Kabashin, western Aleppo.
- On 6 January 2024, alleged shelling killed a child and injured a woman in Idlib city, Idlib governorate.
- On 16 January 2024, alleged shelling killed two civilians and injured six others in Ariha, Idlib governorate.
- On 29 February 2024, an alleged Russian airstrike killed one civilian and injured five others in western Idlib.
- On 10 March 2024, an alleged guided missile hit a vehicle killing a child and injuring five others in Darat Izza, western Aleppo.
- On 1 April 2024, an alleged missile killed one child in Sarmin, Idlib governorate.
- On 5 May 2024, alleged shelling killed a child and injured a woman in Ebizmo, Idlib governorate.
- On 18 May 2024, an alleged guided missile hit a vehicle injuring seven civilians, including four children in Tadil, Aleppo governorate.

#### Attacks and other incidents alleged to have occurred in northern Aleppo, Tall Abyad and Ra's al-Ayn

- On 25 December 2023, up to four alleged airstrikes hit a medical complex in Ain Al Arab city, Aleppo governorate.
- On 6 March 2024, alleged shelling killed a woman and injured one person in Al Sayid Ali village, Aleppo governorate.
- On 31 March 2024, an alleged vehicle-borne improvised explosive device killed seven in a market in Azaz, Aleppo governorate. On 25 April 2024, alleged killing of suspects in Azaz IED explosion during transfer from Al-Jabha Al-Shamiya to military police custody, Aleppo governorate.

#### Attacks and other incidents alleged to have occurred in Dayr Az Zawr, Raqqah and Hasakah governorates

- On 25 December 2023 an alleged airstrike hit a medical oxygen plant on the outskirts of Qamishli city, Hasakah governorate, destroying it. The impact of the strike also damaged a nearby dialysis clinic.
- On 25 December 2023, an alleged ground-based strike on a printing press in Qamishli, Hasakah governorate killed seven civilians and injured three.
- On 15 January 2024, an alleged airstrike hit Swediyeh electricity generation station, Hasakah governorate, rendering the facility out of service.
- On 6 March 2024, alleged killing of six civilian truffle gatherers in Kobajeb, during clashes in the badia, southern Dayr Az Zawr governorate.
- On 22 March 2024, alleged killing of 11 civilian truffle gatherers in the badia between Maadan and Sabkha areas, Raqqah governorate.
- On 26 March 2024, an alleged airstrike impacted a residential area in Dayr Az Zawr city, killing a humanitarian worker, Dayr Az Zawr governorate.

**Attacks and other incidents in Damascus, Hama, Homs, As Suwayda, Dar'a, Al-Ladhiqiya, Tartus**

- On 8 January 2024, armed clashes allegedly killed one civilian and injured four in Yadouda, Dar'a Governorate.
- On 8 January 2024, an alleged airstrike killed two civilians in Al Shaab, As Suwayda governorate.
- On 19 January 2024, an alleged airstrike killed ten civilians in Arman, As Suwayda governorate.
- On 7 February 2024, an alleged airstrike killed eight civilians and injured 12 including a child in Homs city, Homs governorate.
- On 28 February 2024, a man allegedly killed and another injured by gunfire while peacefully protesting outside government offices in As Suwayda city, As Suwayda governorate.
- On 1 April 2024, an alleged airstrike hit a building adjacent to the Iranian Embassy in the Mezze neighbourhood of Damascus killing at least 16 people, including two civilians.
- On 7 April 2024, during clashes between pro-Government armed groups in Sanamin city, Dar'a governorate at least 10 civilians, including three children and a woman were killed. At least four captured fighters were also reportedly executed in the incident.
- On 10 April 2024, alleged restrictions were imposed on commercial vehicles entering Rukban camp, Homs governorate, leading to severe shortages of food items and medicines amongst camp residents.

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REFERENCE: COISYRIA/44/2024

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Further to our previous note verbale, dated 4 June 2024 and in the context of the Commission’s investigations for its upcoming report to the HRC’s fifty-seventh session in September 2024, the Commission would welcome any information you may be able to share regarding the following alleged incidents, dating from May and June:

- On 15 May 2024, a boy was allegedly shot in the head and killed as he was swimming near an SDF-manned checkpoint in Dernaj village, Eastern Dayr-al-Zawr.
- On 22 May 2024, armed men opened fire on the crowd using an automatic weapon, killing two boys and injuring four civilians in Dernaj village, Eastern Dayr-al-Zawr.
- On 27 May 2024, during a protest held in front of the Raqqa civil council, a man filming the peaceful protests was allegedly beaten, while protestors were intimidated by armed men. Several civilians involved in organizing the protests were allegedly arrested in their homes by security forces and taken into custody for two days.
- On 31 May 2024, alleged airstrikes hit several locations in Hasakah governorate, causing casualties both amongst SDF fighters and civilians. In one airstrike near Tal Hamis village, seven civilians, including two boys and a woman were allegedly injured.
- On 31 May 2024, alleged airstrikes hit a farm in Al-Hatimiya village, near Qamishli, damaging an ambulance with a visible Red Crescent emblem and injuring a first responder.
- On 15 June, a civilian was allegedly arrested in Dhiban, detained in Al-Omar fields and allegedly died in custody.

The Commission would also welcome any information your Government may be able to share regarding the following incidents in which your forces may have been involved, according to the information received:

- On 28 May 2024, two children aged seven and nine were allegedly killed and a baby seriously injured by an anti-tank guided missile outside their house near Kafr Nouran, Aleppo Governorate.
- On 1 June 2024, two farmers and a boy were allegedly killed by an anti-tank guided missile near Atarib, Aleppo Governorate.
- On 23 June 2024, alleged clashes at an SAA checkpoint at Suwayda' northern exit between government forces and local militias with reported use of light weapons and shelling, injured one civilian, Suwayda' Governorate.

In order for the information to be received and processed ahead of its next reporting obligations, the Commission would kindly request that any inputs be received by 23 July 2024. We remain ready to discuss the most appropriate means by which to obtain the above information, including through meetings or briefings.

For any questions regarding the details of this request or opportunities to collaborate, please contact the Secretariat, at [ohchr-coisvria@un.org](mailto:ohchr-coisvria@un.org) [ohchr-coisvria@un.org](mailto:ohchr-coisvria@un.org)

The Secretariat of the Commission of Inquiry avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 17 June 2024



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