



Over 100 casualties within 24 hours: Assad warplanes commit horrific attacks in Hasakah, Idlib and Homs

On the 20th and 21st of January, 2015, the air force of the Assad regime committed three attacks over less than 24 hours. The first attack was carried by warplanes against the city of Saraqeb, which is located in the north of Syria and belongs to the Idlib governorate. In contrast, combat helicopters were involved in the second attack on the northeastern town of Khansa (close to the city of Hasakah). Helicopters also struck Hula city, close to the city of Homs. The three attacks combined resulted in over 100 deaths and over 150 wounded.

Khansa attack (Hasakah Province)

At around 12:30 pm on Monday the 20th of January, 2015, Syrian air force combat helicopters attacked a livestock (sheep) and food market in Khansa. The town of Khansa belongs to the Tal Hamis municipality and is located in the countryside around Hanakah. Amongst local people, the sheep market is also known as the “Tim” market. People who cannot enter areas controlled by the Assad regime have set up this makeshift and popular market.

Monitors from the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS) stressed that a helicopter that carried out the bombing had previously surveyed the area around 11 am. Both at this time and at the time of the attack, the target area was crowded with civilians. This strongly suggests that the civilians were killed in a premeditated attack. In the actual attack, Assad forces launched seven barrel bombs and fifteen cluster bombs. As a result, sixty people died of the initial blasts and over one hundred people were wounded.

The bodies of the victims, as well as those wounded in the attack, were transferred to a number of field hospitals. These field hospitals included Al Houli hospital and a number of other hospitals in the town of Al Shaddadi. Some others were brought to the As-Salaam hospital in the city of Qamishli on the Turkish border. The medical staff in these hospitals was overwhelmed by the sudden outpour of need. In particular, the staff struggled to carry out the many necessary amputations and to stem the heavy bleeding of some victims. This situation was aggravated by the shortage of both staff and supplies, and led to further unnecessary loss of life.

The town of Khansa, in which the attack took place, is under siege by Syrian regime forces. ISIS controls the town, but any legitimate military target was at least 1500 meters away from where the attack occurred. ISIS currently also controls Shaddadi and Markada (both south of Hasakah), Jebel Abdulaziz to the west, and the town of Al Houli to the



East. Hasakah itself is divided between the People's Protection Units (the armed wing of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party, PYD) and Syrian regime forces.

By the end of Thursday, the 22nd of January, DCHRS monitors recorded 75 casualties from the Khansa attack. The majority of the victims remain unidentified, because of the state in which their bodies were found. A list of names shall be published if and when these become known. Given that both the Syrian regime and ISIS target DCHRS, the monitors continue to face grave difficulty in obtaining accurate reports.

Saqareb Attack (Idlib Province)

At 2:30 pm on Monday, the 20th of January, a "Sukhoi" type warplane fired three fuel-air explosive missiles on civilian targets in Saqareb. The area most affected was the industrial district, which was also the place with the highest number of victims. At least seven individuals were killed in the air raids, out of which the identity of only four could be confirmed by the time this report was prepared. In addition, more than twenty people were wounded by the attack.

The wounded were taken to a field hospital close to Saqareb, which faced a severe shortage of medical supplies. The attack also set a number of houses ablaze. Civil defense teams affiliated with the opposition-controlled Saqareb city council eventually extinguished the fire.

By the end of Thursday, the 22nd of January, DCHRS monitors recorded seven deaths. The four people who have been identified were:

- Mohamed Sobhi Al-Abdullah, also known by the name Mohamed Sobhi Abu Basil, resident of Saraqeb
- Ahmed Shawef Elzeraud, resident of Saraqeb
- Yahya Ahmed Lounes, resident of Saraqeb
- Hamdan Mekhlef Hamad, resident of Rasm Abed

Hula Attack (Homs Province)

At about 1 pm on Wednesday, the 21st of January, a combat helicopter of the Assad regime air force dropped two four hundred kilogram barrel bombs on residential areas in the Kafr Laha town. Kafr Laha is a town located in the Hula area, along the Masyaf – Hama road. Eight other barrel bombs were dropped on Tel Dhahab, another town in the Hula area, which led to the deaths of thirteen people and which wounded 25 others.



By the end of Wednesday, the 21st of January, DCHRS monitors recorded thirteen deaths. Their names are as follows:

- Mahmoud Fawzi Bakour, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Amer Fawzi Bakour, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Halima Khader al-Qasim, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Hassan Abdel Salam Jamaa, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Bassam Adnan Al-Sulaiman, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Farouk Farid Orabi, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Abdel El Muti al-Ali, resident of Tel Dhahab
- Basil Saeed Ali, male, civilian, resident of Hula
- Fayez Eido Bakour, resident of Tel Dhahab (child)
- Ibtisam al-Ali, female, civilian, resident of Hula
- Saad Ahmed Mousa, also known by the name of Abu Wasim, resident of Tel Dou
- Ziad Khader Khansh, resident of Houla (child)
- Ahmed Ali Ismail, resident of Aqrab, internally displaced to Houla

The acts of the Syrian air force are carried out on the basis of orders from the Syrian regime. Therefore, these systematic and consecutive massacres should be considered state policy as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

These two massacres constitute serious violations of international law and international norms. The massacres can be classified as a war crime under Article 8-2-b-ix of the Rome Statute, which criminalizes: *“Intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, that is, objects which are not military objectives.”*

With these attacks, the Syrian regime targeted residential neighborhoods and areas that provide refuge to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Under the Rome Statute, these are not legitimate military targets. These acts can be classified as a war crime under article 8-2-b-ix of the Rome Statute (amongst other articles): *“Intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives”*.



Moreover, the regime used fuel-air explosive missiles that led to a high number of civilian casualties. The Syrian regime's use of force against civilians can also be classified as a war crime under article 8-2-b-vi: *"Intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated."*

ISIS also carries responsibility because it established military centers in the middle of residential areas. ISIS knowingly puts the lives of the civilians in danger with this decision.

DCHRS appeals to the United Nations and its Secretary General to take immediate action to protect Syrian civilians from the perpetual attacks. The DCHRS warns that the silence of the international community will lead to further atrocities. In the absence of external intervention, the Assad regime will continue to shed the blood of innocent civilians. At a minimum, the DCHRS urges the international community to immediately impose a safe zone to protect Syrian civilians.

Damascus Center for Human Rights

Jan 22, 2015

Images of Saqareb Attack (Idlib Province), Jan 20, 2015





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Images of Hula Attack (Homs Province) and victims, Jan 21, 2015







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[The Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies \(DCHRS\)](#) is an independent human rights NGO that monitors the human rights situation in Syria. Established in 2005, it was initially located in the Syrian capital of Damascus. The mission of DCHRS is to promote respect for human rights in Syria.

DCHRS engages in numerous documentation projects. These projects include [daily casualty reports](#), reports on particular massacres, and the reporting and documenting of other human rights violations. DCHRS has also works to lobby and advocate for Syrian human rights, and aims to draw the world's attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria.

Since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, the center has expanded its activities, working to coordinate and communicate with activists. At this time, the center began documenting the daily violations committed by Syrian regime forces, many of which can be classified as crimes against humanity or war crimes. As the conflict developed, DCHRS expanded its monitoring activities to all armed groups.

Human rights violations recorded by DCHRS have included (but are not limited to): extrajudicial killings, massacres, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, rape, and torture. DCHRS has [opened local offices in Syria](#) in order to document evidence concerning human rights violations on the ground. These reports have been submitted by DCHRS to many international and regional human rights organizations, as well as with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (established by the UN).



DCHRS recognizes and adheres to all pertinent international human rights agreements and declarations issued by the UN. DCHRS is also a member of the following international networks:

- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
- NGO Coalition for the international Criminal Court
- International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP)
- International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC)

