



## Targeting Schools as a Form of Punishment

### **Syrian forces attacked two elementary schools in Damascus and Aleppo killing 37 children**

The conflict in Syria has revealed horrific violations, most of which were perpetrated by Syrian regime forces. These crimes included extra judicial killing, torture, rape, massacres, and genocide. In addition, such systematic crimes have been categorized under crimes against humanity and war crimes, where the regime used weapons that are banned according to international laws and conventions. However, due to the inaction from the international community to stop the killing, end the violence, and protect civilians, the regime continues escalating the violence, committing more tragic crimes, perpetrating worse violations, destroying schools, hospitals, and places of worship, wiping entire villages and cities, and disregarding the lives of civilians who are being indiscriminately targeted.

On September 29, 2014, the Syrian regime forces launched an airstrike attack targeting a commercial high school in Al-Raqqa province North West of Syria killing 16 students. Subsequently the regime continued its strategy of targeting operational schools by perpetrating two recent attacks against elementary schools in Damascus and Aleppo.

On April 29, 2014, Al-Shaghour neighborhood in the capital Damascus was struck by mortar shells and rocket launchers. 6 missiles hit “Sheikh Bader al-Deen al-Hasni” institute killing 16 children who were documented by DCHRS. Additionally DCHRS documented 80 children who were wounded; some of them are in critical conditions.

On April 30 at 9:00 AM, the Syrian regime targeted deliberately “Ein Jaalout” School in Al-Anssari Al-Sharqi neighborhood in Aleppo. Students were attending an art exhibit peacefully while they were struck by a vacuum bomb from an airstrike perpetrated by regime forces. DCHRS was able to document the death of 21 students and more than 20 are wounded in critical conditions. This attack came after a cease-fire agreement between regime forces and opposition forces; however, the regime breached the truce and targeted the school taking the lives of innocent children.

DCHRS condemns in the strongest terms the crimes committed by the Syrian regime against the children and the civilians. DCHRS considers targeting schools and killing children as violations of international laws, agreements, and conventions. Therefore, DCHRS demands protecting civilians according to the laws approved by the U.N in 2005. In addition since DCHRS is a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), DCHRS appeals to the international community to practically enforce the “Responsibility to Protect”. Furthermore DCHRS calls all the international medical and humanitarian organizations to provide support, medical assistance, and relief to ease the suffering of the Syrian people inside Syria and abroad. Finally DCHRS demands to prosecute the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity and to bring them to justice.

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DCHRS is an independent, non-governmental organization, established in 2005, located in the Syrian capital of Damascus. Its mission is to foster a spirit of support and respect for the values and standards of human rights in Syria. As such, DCHRS recognizes and adheres to all pertinent international human rights agreements and declarations issued by the UN.

- DCHRS is 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)

DCHRS worked on a variety of documentation projects. Such projects included daily casualty reports, massacre reports, and other human rights violations reports. Also DCHRS has been working on advocacy and lobbying in different human rights institutions in order to educate and acknowledge about the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria.. After the launch of the Syrian revolution, the center increased its activities through working, communicating, and coordinating with many members and activists. Thus the center began documenting daily violations committed by the Syrian regime forces that can be classified as crimes against humanity and war crimes. Such violations included: extrajudicial killings, massacres, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, rape, torture in prisons. DCHRS opened local offices in Syria in order to document, collect, and observe human rights violations on the ground. DCHRS submitted those reports to many international and regional human rights organizations and communicated with the Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic on Syria.