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At Least 50 Persons Killed in a Horrific Massacre Against Residents of Zardana Town- Idlib Countryside

**The Attack Occurred on the Evening of June 8, 2018, by a
Warplane Took off from Hmeimim Airbase**

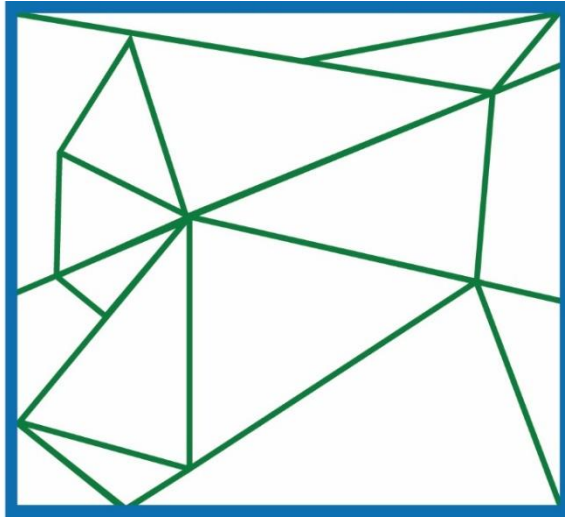
About Syrians for Truth and Justice

[Syrians for Truth and Justice \(STJ\)](#) is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and nationalities. It also includes members of other nationalities.

The initiative strives for SYRIA, where all Syrian citizens (males and females) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

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Introduction:

On June 8, 2018, at least 50 persons were killed, including women and children, and up to 80 injured following an aerial bombardment of a residential neighborhood in [Zardana](#) town located in Idlib countryside. According to numerous testimonies obtained by STJ, a warplane believed to be Russian had carried out two airstrikes on the Southern district of the town, dropping four vacuum rockets at one batch during each raid and thus increasing the number of civilian casualties and wounded.

According to the field researcher of STJ, bombarding the southern neighborhood of Zardana coincided with scores of worshippers heading to the mosque to perform Tarawih prayers in Ramadan, increasing the number of deaths. He pointed out that although Zardana is a small town with a population of 7000 inhabitants, it is considered to be an important town because of its strategic location and being close to Syrian regime-held towns of Kafriya and Fu'ah, which are inhabited by the majority of Shia people. Just a day before the massacre, **armed clashes** had erupted between factions of the Syrian armed opposition factions on the one hand and the Syrian regular forces and their pro-militias on the other hand, on the fighting fronts among towns of Zardana, Kafriya and Fu'ah in Idlib province. The field researcher said that these clashes had resulted in the wounding of several elements of militia loyal to Syrian regular forces, following the latter's attempt to carry out multiple sniping operations and targeting the main roads between Kafriya, Fu'ah and Zardana. Adding that Zardana, several days before the massacre, had seen **armed clashes and confrontations** between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham/HTS on the one hand against Jaysh al-Ahrar and other factions such as Suqour al-Sham on the other hand, when HTS took over a section of Zardana while Jaysh al-Ahrar and Suqour al-Sham took over another section.



It is worth mentioning that the massacre came only a day after the Russian President Vladimir Putin [announced](#) that his country's forces would remain on the Syrian ground to ensure Russia's security in the region.

The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, [expressed](#) deep concern about the air strikes that reportedly targeted the town of Zardana in northern countryside of Idlib on June 8, 2018, killing dozens including children. He called for "a full investigation into the attacks, specially allegations that there was a second strike targeting the first responders, to establish accountability".

Earlier, Idlib province had witnessed another massacre in Ma'ar Zita town located in Idlib countryside when there was shelling on a shelter on May 9, 2018 claiming lives of nine civilians including children and women. STJ had prepared a [report](#) regarding the incident, as well as another [report](#) concerning the killing of two women and two children and wounding up to 50 persons in a car bomb blast in Idlib city on May 26, 2018.

Details of the incident

At 9:10 p.m. June 8, 2018, a warplane believed to be Russian carried out an airstrike on the southern neighborhood of Zardana, located in Idlib countryside, and in less than half an hour, the warplanes bombed the same area again, causing many civilian casualties, being dead or injured, as reported by Mohammed Jouma'a, head of the Local Council in Zardana, who said,

"This has been the most horrific massacre against the people of Zardana since the outbreak of the Syrian war, knowing that the town follows the local council that administers the civil matters. In addition, Zardana accommodated more than 2,000

displaced persons who came from most of the Syrian provinces. The targeted neighborhood was a safe place for the locals and it consisted of several buildings adjacent to a mosque. The bombardment coincided with the people going to perform prayers in the mosque but the Russian warplanes targeted the area with two double airstrikes. There was no sign of any military targets within the town completely. Up to 50 persons have been killed, including women and children, as well as scores of injuries."



An image of some of the aftermath of an airstrike inflicted to Zardana town, Idlib countryside on June 8, 2018. Photo credit: STJ

Mohammed Redwan, a media activist who went to the strike location, assured to STJ that the targeted area is just a residential neighborhood inhabited by many people. He continued:

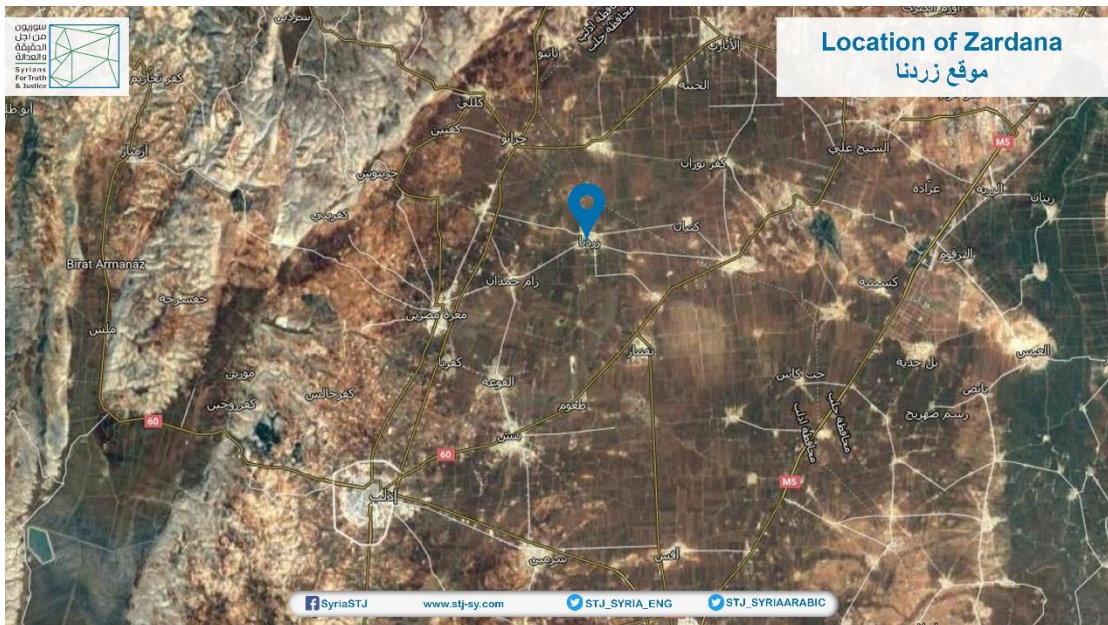
"I went to the strike location immediately after the first attack, and according to the observatories, a Russian warplane had carried out the raid dropping four vacuum rockets at one batch, causing considerable destruction in the neighborhood. At first, I tried to document what happened, but within moments, the warplane returned and attacked the same place, killing many civilians, including the Civil Defense members who were working to rescue the injured. Moreover, many residents were seriously and moderately injured by shrapnel. I tried to help the rescue teams and worked with them for half an hour, but I could not complete the work because I got shortness of breath. three days after the massacre, the toll death was 51 deaths and more than 80 wounds."

A further testimony to STJ by Mohamed Abdlghani, a native of Zardana who was present at the time of the attack, said the first raid occurred at 9:10 p.m. followed by another at 9:30 p.m., adding:

"When the first airstrike took place, the residents immediately rushed to the strike location so that they could rescue the wounded, but around 20 minutes later, the warplane returned and dropped its load in the same place, increasing the numbers of deaths and wounds. I witnessed entire families killed, and buildings of two-and-three-stories were razed to the ground. The process of recovering the dead and the missing lasted for 35 hours, and about 15 critical patients were dispatched to Turkish hospitals due to the seriousness of their injuries. The horrific scenes unfolded after the first hours of dawn. The devastation was so immense as if an earthquake had struck the area. It should be mentioned that the targeted neighborhood was just a civil neighborhood, with no military signs or headquarters."



An image shows the strike location of a vacuum rocket in Zardana town, Idlib countryside on June 8, 2018. Photo credit: STJ





Analysis of a visual evidence.

One of the supervisors on the warplane observatory in Ma'arat Mesreen town adjacent to Zardana, told ST, that they had received a call at 9:02 p.m. on June 8, 2018, about the takeoff of a warplane believed to be Russian from Hememim airbase in Latakia province, adding:

"After the aircraft took off, it flew to the north, we immediately spotted it by transmitting information among the observatories through our available devices. We were informed that it arrived the airspace of Idlib province after about six minutes of its takeoff. Then, it took the north western axis. Alternatively, we circulated to the rest of regions to be cautious and alert. Minutes later, the aircraft carried out its attack at 9:10 pm on the town of Zardana northwest of Ma'arat Mesreen area. Sound of the explosion reached our town, and immediately we told the Civil Defense and rescue teams to go to the impact site, but almost 20 minutes later, the warplanes retargeted the same location with vacuum rockets. so we informed all the people to evacuate the area. The death toll in this massacre was very large and prompted us to send to the rescue teams in the surrounding villages such as Taftanaz and Ma'arat Mesreen to go to the strike location and participate in rescuing victims of this massacre."



An image showing a side of process of pulling out civilian deaths and wounds following the aerial bombardment on Zardana, Idlib countryside June 8, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

"Um Muhammad", one of the women who survived this horrific massacre, reported to STJ that she was at home when the warplanes launched an attack on the southern neighborhood, and added in this regard,

"At 9:10 p.m., while I was at home with my children, we heard the sound of a very huge explosion, within moments, parts of my house destroyed and some rooms damaged, but fortunately, the strike location was far from us. However, my son was injured in the head and began to bleed; at once, I carried him and took him to one of the cars and we drove him to the medical post. After that, I came back home to check the rest of my children, but I found none; it drove me crazy, but thankfully, I heard their voice after a while, as the Civil Defense teams had reached the place and evacuated the children. I went back to the medical post, where my son was staying,

and after about half an hour, we heard another huge explosion that shook the whole town. I did not know what happened after that because I was in the medical post waiting for my husband who went to the house after the first attack. I waited for him, but he never came; he was killed in the second raid. As a consequence of this massacre, I lost seven of my relatives as well, plus my cousins who were killed in the second airstrike. This town has always been a safe place for us, but after what happened to us, it turned into a lonely place."

In a testimony came by Mustafa Haji Yusuf, an element of the Civil Defence in Idlib province, told STJ that attacking Zardana led to the collapse of several residential buildings, and that the Civil Defense teams rushed to the strike location immediately after it took place. He added,

"We arrived at the impact site and worked to pull out the trapped from under the rubble. The warplanes targeted the same place again, doubling numbers of the killed. The second raid caused wounds to the Civil Defense personnel and killed another, besides we documented the killing of 51 persons, including women and children, and the injury of 80. Among the dead were unidentified persons, we were not able to identify them because of the disfigurement of their bodies. That was the toughest day and the most harsh for us because we worked non-stop 35 hours until the Civil Defense finished its work in pulling out the victims from under the rubble."



An image showing a side of the Civil Defense attempts while pulling out the trapped from under the rubble following the aerial bombardment on Zardana, Idlib countryside on June 8, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

[A video footage](#) published by the official face book page of Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing with Turkey showed part of the rescue operations and transporting the injured to Turkey for cure as a result of bombarding Zardana town on June 8, 2018.

STJ's field researcher was able to verify names of some of the civilian victims who were killed in the horrific massacre against Zardana on June 8, 2018, they are,

- **women**

1. Riham al-Hussein
2. Rehab Hamroush
3. Majd Hamroush
4. Amina, wife of the al-Sheikh Mohammed Hamroush
5. Sabriya Yasouf
6. Falak Amoun



7. Yosra Abdulwahab Loki
8. Nadima Loki
9. Dima Loki
10. Foza Mohammed al-Salamat

● Children

1. Ahmad Hussein Hamroush
2. The baby daughter of Abdulmajeed Yasouf
3. Amani Sousi
4. Sana Aziz Yasouf
5. Mohammed Khalid Soufan
6. An unidentified baby girl.
7. Ahmad Khalid Othman
8. The baby daughter of Abu Taha
9. Suzan Yousef al-Hader

● Men

1. Hamid Ahmad Yasouf
2. Abdulhai Fayez Yasouf
3. Ibrahim Mohammed Yasouf
4. Abdulwahab Loki
5. Murad Loki
6. Mohammed Loki
7. Anas Hussein Loki
8. Khalid Soufan
9. Ahmad Ibrahim Amoun
10. Abdulqader Amoun
11. Abd Ibn Zaher Amoun



12. Mostafa Sabouh
13. Imad al-Hamoud
14. Yousef al-Hader
15. Hassan Ahmad al-Mahmoud
16. Omar Rehabai son of Aisha Hamroush
17. Mohammed Salih Amin
18. Mohsen Hamroush
19. Amer Jouma'a Hamroush
20. Abdullah Aziz Yasouf
21. Ahmad Hasan Yasouf
22. Hussein Mohammed Dib Hamroush
23. Eid Hamroush
24. Mohammed Mahmoud Hamroush
25. Abdullah Ahmad Yasouf
26. Mohammed Khalid Akhras
27. Ali Brade'i (member of the Civil Defense)
28. 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 Seven unidentified dead men.