

May 2018



A Horrific Massacre after Bombing a Popular Market in Harem city-Idlib Countryside

The attack claimed the lives of 43 civilians, including women and children



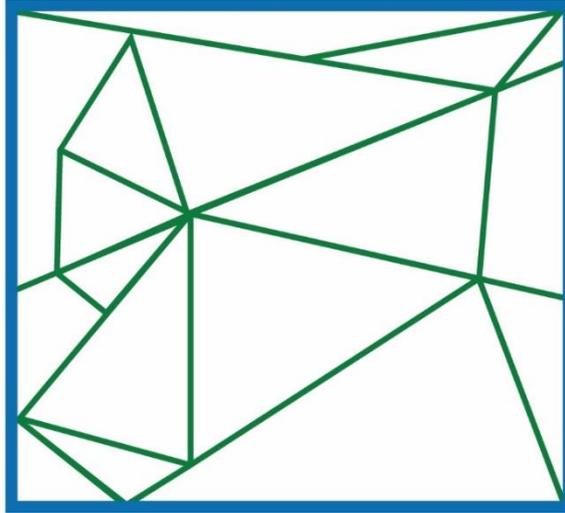
About the organization (STJ)

[Syrians for Truth and Justice \(STJ\)](#) is an independent, nongovernmental organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and 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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Preface

At least forty-three people killed and more than 50 others injured, following the bombardment on a popular market which is usually populated by civilians in the city of [Harem](#)¹ located in Idlib countryside on March 22, 2018. According to numerous testimonies obtained by [STJ](#), warplanes, believed to be Russian, carried out several raids on the popular market and the adjacent neighbourhoods, where they dropped a number of highly explosive rockets, causing the death and injury of many civilians, including women and children, as well as significant material damage.

According to STJ field researcher, the warplanes intended to drop two rockets at once in each raid, although the city is only about 2 km away from the border with Turkey, that it is usually less vulnerable to aerial bombardment, making it a haven for hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons.

The attack caused damage to more than 100 shops, as well as the adjacent residential buildings, which were completely destroyed by the attack, the researcher added.

The attack comes in the context of the military campaign launched by the Syrian regular forces and its Russian allies on all Idlib province as from October 2017, which began with attempts to control villages and towns in the northern countryside of Hama² and then headed to other villages and towns in eastern and southern Idlib countryside.

Syrian regular forces and their allies had already bombed some popular markets in Idlib province, on January 30, 2018, where a military aircraft believed to be Russian targeted a popular market in Arihah town-Idlib countryside, killing 18 civilians, according to an [earlier report](#) prepared by STJ. The organization also prepared a [further report](#) documenting the kill of 10 civilians in Ma`arat al-Nu`man city-Idlib countryside, as a result of bombarding a popular market there on October 8, 2017.

¹ Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham/ formerly Al-Nusra Front controls Harem city since July 17, 2017.

² The Syrian regular forces' escalation came as a result of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham/ formerly Al-Nusra Front's taking control over Abu Dali village located in the northeastern countryside of Hama on October 9, 2017. However, the Syrian regular forces backed with Russian military air force retook the village along with other northeastern villages in Hama countryside on December 29, 2017. Syrian regular forces and their allies also managed to advance towards the south-eastern countryside of Idlib, where it took control over several villages such as (Atshan, al- Khuwayn and Sinjar) on January 7, 2018 with the aim to reach Abu al-Duhur military airport in south-eastern countryside of Idlib. According to STJ researchers, the military operations resulted in the control of the airport by the pro-government forces and allied militias on January 27, 2018.



Details of Bombing the Popular Market in Harem

At 4:11 p.m. on March 22, 2018, military aircraft believed to be Russian, targeted the popular market in the city of Harem with highly explosive rockets, about a few minutes later, the warplanes returned and targeted the civilian neighbourhoods around the market by similar air raids. "Zakaria Juma'a", a survivor of the attack, confirmed that to STJ through a testimony in which he said:

"I was around the popular market in Harem city, when a very massive explosion happened there, I could no longer see well due to the intensity of the thick dust, fragments scattered everywhere, and smoke plumes rose from the popular market. In a few minutes, the rescue and civil defence teams arrived at the scene of the attack, they immediately transferred me to the medical point, as I was slightly injured, which was very crowded because of the large numbers of the dead and injured. About an hour later, while I was in the hospital, I was told that my brother and his two children had died as a result of this attack."

"Juma'a Raji", a civil defence team member in Idlib province, told STJ that the death toll from this horrific massacre reached 43 civilian deaths, including women and children, and said:

"Bombarding the popular market caused intense panic and fear among the people due to the large numbers of dead and injured scattered everywhere, as well as the collapse of entire buildings over the heads of their inhabitants. The civil defence teams made a great effort, that they worked for about 17 hours to lift the wounded and the dead. We managed to lift a child and a civil defence member alive, the death toll from the shelling has reached 43 civilian deaths, including women and children, as well as more than 50 injuries, some of which were transferred to Turkish hospitals owing to the severity of their injuries."



Image shows a side of the devastation caused to the popular market and adjacent residential buildings in the city of Harem, by an aerial bombardment on March 22, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



Another testimony given by "Abdel Karim al-Halabi", a media activist from Harem, in which he reported that the raids by warplanes on the popular market left enormous havoc in the market and civilian property. In this regard he continued:

"22nd of March 2018, was a bloody day in Harem, the popular market and surrounding neighbourhoods were subjected to violent air raids by Russian warplanes. Thankfully, the bombardment came after the end of the kindergarten hours, which is located near one of the targeted neighbourhoods. The bombardment destroyed entire shops, and fires broke out in many. The number of shops destroyed was about 100, because of the intensity of the rocket explosion. We have never seen such devastation."

A [footage](#) published by the Civil Defense in Idlib province showed a side of the devastation in the popular market and surrounding residential neighbourhoods in Harem city, following the aerial bombardment of March 22, 2018. The video, filmed on the day after the incident (March 23, 2018), shows a member of the civil defence talking about two raids by military aircraft at 4 p.m. on March 22, 2018, targeted the popular market in the city and the adjacent residential neighbourhoods.



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Image taken from a [footage](#) published by the Syrian Civil Defense on March 23, 2018, shows a side of the devastation caused to a popular market in Harem.



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Image shows a civil defense member giving his personal testimony about bombing a popular market in Harem. [Source](#).

A monitor at the military aviation observatory in Harem, confirmed to STJ that a warplane, likely to be Russian, had took off from the Hmeimim air Base in Latakia province at 4:02 p.m. on March 22, 2018, and carried out the attack on Harem city at 4:11pm of that day. In this regard he continued:

"After this warplane took off from the Hmeimim air Base, it headed north, so we tracked it until it began circling in the sky of Idlib, as such warplanes always do, that they dodge prior attacking to monitor gatherings and populated areas and bomb them. So we sent a warning call to all villages and towns, and after only ten minutes, the plane flew from Idlib north-west towards the border areas, and when it arrived Harem it launched several violent raids on the city, although Harem is close to the border with Turkey."



Image shows the attempts of the civil defense to lift the wounded and the dead from under the rubble, following the aerial bombardment on a popular market and surrounding residential buildings in Harem on March 22, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



Image shows a residential building, adjacent to the popular market in the city of Harem, on which a rocket landed.

Photo credit: STJ



"Abdel Aziz Diab", a doctor at the health center in Harem city, told Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ that the large numbers of wounded, who had fallen as a result of the attack, made it difficult for them to accommodate and treat such a number. In this regard he continued:

“The injured were divided into two groups, the first was evacuated to Harem hospital, and the other was evacuated to the health center, where I work. A large number of the injured have been transferred to nearby hospitals such as Salqin Hospital or Darkush hospital in Idlib city or Turkish hospitals, because of our inability to absorb the large number of wounded and the limited number of operating rooms. Many of the injured we received, suffered serious burns due to the force of the blast, and some of the dead bodies were completely charred, and others turned into pieces and had not been identified as a result. It is the first time the city of Harem witness such a horrific massacre in which the death of entire families was recorded, such as al-Husrum family. 43 civilians were killed and more than 50 others injured as a result of this attack and death toll continues to rise owing to the seriousness of some injuries.”





Analysis of visual evidence.

STJ field researcher documented the names of some civilians, including women and children, killed in the horrific massacre of Harem city on March 22, 2018:



1. Saeed Ahed Kheara (child).
2. Sajeda Subhi (girl child).
3. Abdul Qader Muhtadi al-Omer (child).
4. Rawa'a Ghadab (girl child).
5. Nada Aleeko (girl child).
6. Muhammad Kheara (child).
7. Sarah Kheara (girl child).
8. Janah Jublaq (girl child).
9. Sundus Jublaq (girl child).
10. Mariam Husrum (girl child).
11. Yasmeen Husrum (girl child).
12. Hussain Husrum (child).
13. Unidentified child.
14. Unidentified child.
15. Unidentified child.
16. Unidentified child.
17. Aya Mared (17 years).
18. Huda Armanazi (55 years).
19. Najma al-Mashi (35 years).
20. Juma'a Zakaria Fadel (39 years).
21. Juma'a Yousuf Fadel (38 years).
22. Yusuf Juma'a Fadel (60 years).
23. Osama Burhan (33 years).
24. Ahmad al-Sha'aban (55 years).
25. Dr. Muhammad Husrum (36 years).
26. Abdul Qader al-Muhatadi (22 years).
27. Bakour baker (20 years).
28. Mahmmoud Shekh Hamed (18 years).
29. Mustafa al-Lathkani (22 years).
30. Hasan al-Salloum (35 years).
31. Kinan Khouzami (55 years).
32. Abdul Lateif al-Aswad (40 years).
33. Kinan Ghazal (55 years).
34. Juma'a Fadel (40 years).
35. Mustafa Mared (55 years).
36. Ahmad Fadel (33 years).
37. Ali Muhtadi (22 years).
38. Muhammad Muhtadi (45 years).
39. Shareef Haidar (45 years).