

May 2018



# A Huge Blast Kills 29 People and Injures more than 150 in Idlib

Preliminary Reports Suggest the Cause of the Explosion to be a long-range Missile

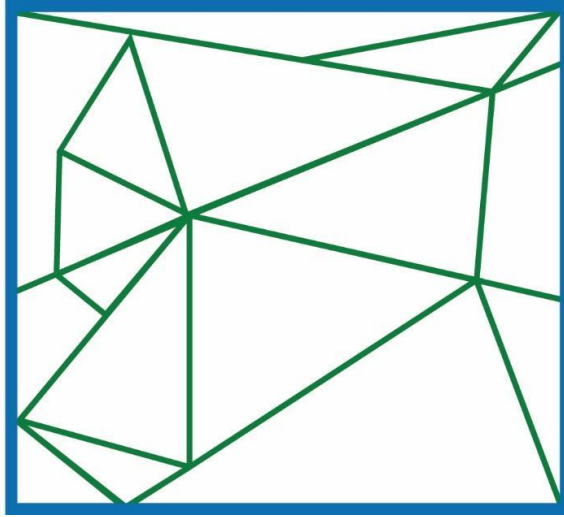
## About Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ

[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.

سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  

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Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice





## A Huge Blast Kills 29 People and Injures more than 150 in Idlib

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## Preface

A massive explosion rocked a residential district of [Idlib](#)<sup>1</sup> city center on April 9, 2018, which resulted in at least 29 deaths and 150 injuries among civilians. According to several testimonies obtained by STJ, a long-range missile, fired from the Russian battleships in the Mediterranean, likely caused the blast, because of the significant material damage it caused, where a seven-storey residential building collapsed, as well as the significant physical damage of nearby buildings, according to a resident of Idlib who is an expert in remnants of war, the depth of the crater caused by the explosion, reached up to 7 meters and 14 meters in diameter, which indicates that this the explosion could have resulted from the launch of a long-range rocket. While one of the overseers of the military aviation observatories in Idlib Governorate reported that, he had sent a circular to Idlib's people, to guard against a long-range rocket from the Mediterranean, just before the explosion.

According to STJ field researcher, there were conflicting reports in Idlib about the cause of the blast, whether it was a car bomb or a long-range missile, noting that no remnants or hard core evidence was found to confirm the cause of the explosion. But he stated that the magnitude of the devastation caused by this explosion, and the eyewitness' assertions that they heard a rocket sound clearly just before the explosion, indicate that the destruction was caused by a long-range missile explosion.

Idlib had earlier been subjected to violent attacks by Syrian regular forces and its allies, as STJ had earlier prepared a report entitled "[Grave Massacre Claims Lives of 20 People Mostly Children in Kafr Battikh, Idlib Countryside, The Attack on March 21, 2018, was on a Shelter following Civilians Hid within Fearing of Warplanes.](#)" The organization had also prepared a further report entitled "[Military Escalation during March- Idlib Province, Attacks on Educational Facilities in Idlib City and a Massacre in Kafr Sijnah, Idlib Countryside.](#)"

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<sup>1</sup> Idlib is under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front).

## Incident Details

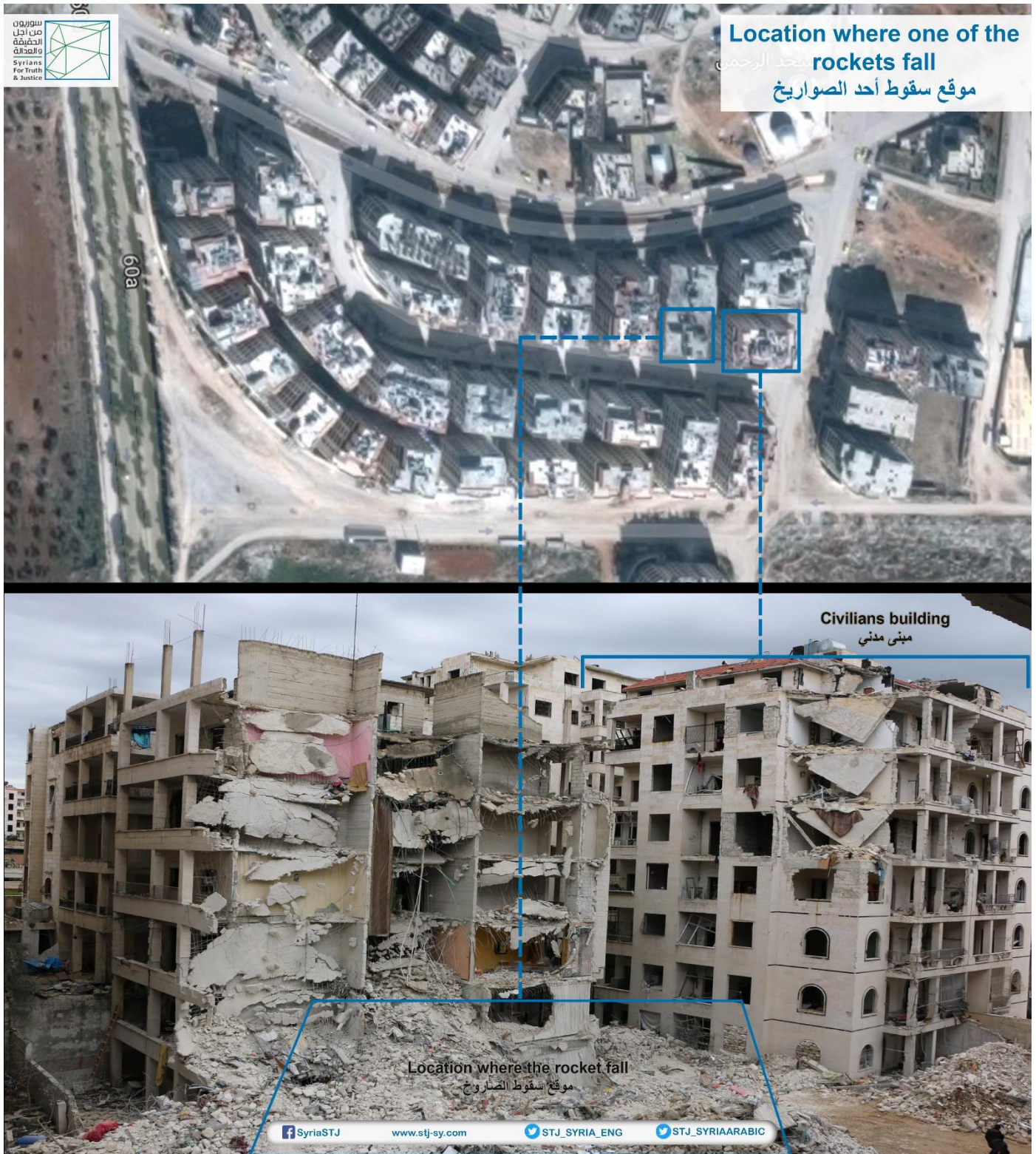
At 6:00 p.m. on April 9, 2018, a huge blast took place in Idlib city, specifically in al-Naseem residential area, the explosion caused the death and the injury of many civilians, as well as the destruction of a seven-storey building, which was confirmed by the "Safi Hamam" a media activist from Idlib who spoke to STJ, saying:

"As soon as I heard the explosion, I drove my car to the site to document what happened, I was shocked with the magnitude of the devastation caused by the explosion, let alone the panic and fear that all those present felt, given the large number of casualties and fatalities, where the civil defense teams continued to carry out trapped from under the rubble despite the numerous difficulties.

Most of the buildings at the site of the explosion were significantly destroyed. The death of 29 people and the injury of more than 150 others was documented. We didn't find the cause of the explosion, but by looking at the massive damage it left, we suggest the cause to be a highly explosive missile fired from the Russian battleships, especially since I searched and saw no traces or residue of a car bomb, according to eyewitnesses from the city, the residents heard a clear voice of a rocket just before the explosion occurred."



A satellite image shows the explosion site



Analysis of visual evidence



Image shows a side of the devastation in Idlib city, following a massive explosion on April 9, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

"Mustafa al-Haj Ali", the information Director of the Directorate of Education in Idlib province, also confirmed to STJ, that many eyewitnesses had heard the sound of a rocket falling just before the explosion. In that connection, he said:

**"The explosion occurred near (Najib Faleh and al-Zahir Baybars) schools in the al-Naseem neighborhood, causing the damage of furniture and documents in these two schools, it also led to the death of some students. So we decided to close the schools for three days after the explosion and the subsequent casualties that included deaths of school pupils namely: (Obeida Najib and Farah Kardash). According to eyewitnesses from the city, it is likely that a long-range rocket fired from Russian battleships caused the explosion."**



Image shows the attempts of the civil defense teams to retrieve the victims of a massive explosion, which took place in Idlib on April 9, 2018. Photo credit: STJ

"Ahmed Sheikho", director of the Civil Defense Center in Idlib province, told STJ that (29) civilians casualties resulted from an unidentified explosion, which targeted a residential neighborhood in Idlib city, causing considerable material damage, and he goes on to say:

**"At 6:00 pm, we heard a huge blast, so we rushed to the scene and we were shocked to see a seven-storey residential building collapsed over the heads of its inhabitants and razed to the ground. The civil defense teams began evacuating the injured from the scene of the explosion, they worked for about 16 consecutive hours, until they managed to remove the dead from the rubble, rescue four people alive, and transfer (155) injured people to a number of medical points."**





Image shows a side of the devastation caused to al-Naseem neighborhood by the massive explosion of April 9, 2018. Photo credit: STJ

"Abu Muhammad", the supervisor of a military aviation observatory in Idlib, gave another testimony to STJ where he said that the observers sent a circular to people of Idlib, in order to be wary of a long-range rocket launched from Russian battleships in the Mediterranean, at 5:55 p.m. on April 9, 2018, just a few minutes before the explosion, he continued:

**"These kinds of rockets usually don't take too long to directly reach their target. Of course we didn't see the rocket with the naked eye, but we were told by some observatories adjacent to the coast that they spotted a long-range missile fired from the Russian battleships, so we directed a circular to Idlib people on the evening of that day, and only a few minutes later it was circulated by the Idlib observatory for a huge explosion in the al-Naseem neighborhood."**



Image shows an aspect of the devastation in the al-Naseem neighborhood in Idlib, following a huge explosion there on April 9, 2018. Photo credit: STJ

"Muhammad al-Hussein", an expert in remnants of war field from Idlib province, said to STJ that the explosion that shook Idlib on April 9, 2018, was likely caused by a long-range rocket, and in this regard he goes on to say:

**"After the explosion scene had been processed, it was found that the depth of the crater left by the explosion was more than 7 meters depth, and 14 meters in diameter. In my view, this is an evidence of a large stockpile of TNT that could be carried by a long-range rocket or the so-called Intercontinental missile, given the massive destruction, it may be likely eventuality. However, there is currently no evidence to suggest car bombing. In other words, usually the explosion which caused by car bomb, whatever its size, cannot cause a crater of that depth, and cannot cause material damage to buildings located 500 meters in diameter from the scene of the explosion."**



STJ field researcher documented the names of some civilians, including women and children, killed in the huge blast in Idlib city on April 9, 2018, they are:

1. Sila Zakour (girl child).
2. Saif Zakour (child).
3. Obaida Zaidan (child).
4. Sana al-Asa'ad (girl child).
5. Ismaiel al-Asa'ad (child).
6. Shahla Assi (girl child).
7. Ghazal Shawi (girl child).
8. Laial Shawi (girl child).
9. Khaled Hammami (child).
10. Farah Kardrash (girl child).
11. Bushra al-Asa'ad.
12. Aisha al-Asa'ad.
13. Sameera Shawi.
14. Raghad Jarkas.
15. Ahed Jarkas.
16. Wala'a Ma'atouq.
17. Ahed Shawi.
18. Mariam Shawi.
19. Wafa'a Hano.
20. Maha Hano.
21. Marwa Othman Habaq.
22. Hiba Rihawi.
23. Hasna'a Safia.
24. Owais al-Bakour.
25. Yasser Battal.
26. Muhammad al-Faseil.
27. Obaida Hazem Najeeb.
28. Waheed Hamada.
29. Unidentified man.