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Civilian Deaths and Wounds in Violent Reprisal Military Attacks Against Idlib Province-June and July 2018

**Syrian Regular Forces and Their Allies Bombarded Towns and
Cities of Idlib Countryside Violently As Response to Attacks
Against them by Armed Opposition Factions Earlier**

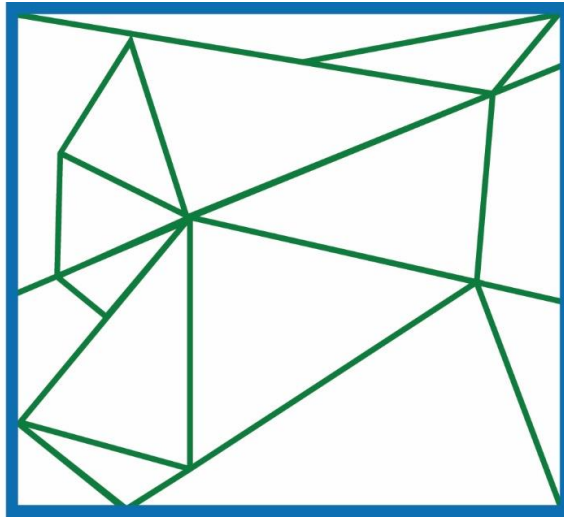
About Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ

[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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*Syrian Regular Forces and Their Allies Bombarded Towns and Cities of Idlib Countryside Violently
As Response to Attacks Against them by Armed Opposition Factions Earlier*



Introduction

The Syrian regular forces and their allies continued their military attacks against towns and cities of Idlib province during July 2018 and June ahead of that. On July 10, 11, and 12, 2018 the Syrian regular warplanes targeted towns and cities of the western countryside of Idlib such as Rami, Orom al-Joz, Bani Ezz Church, and Jisr al-Shughour countryside, causing the death and injury of many civilians as well as leaving material damage to property.

The field researcher of STJ said the violent attacks came a day after a military offensive by the armed opposition factions against the Syrian regular forces station in Latakia countryside, which had killed and wounded several combatants of the Syrian regular forces, adding that the bombardment by the Syrian regular forces caused an exodus displacement of the locals of those towns to safer cities such as Jisr al-Shughour fearful of targeting their houses.

Earlier in June 2018, the Syrian regular forces had targeted towns and cities of Idlib countryside. On June 10, 2018, the warplanes of the Syrian regular forces bombarded Taftanaz towns with several airstrikes one of them hit an-Nour Specialist Hospital for children in the town so it went out of service. The airstrikes killed 14 persons, including children and women.

On June 11, 2018, the warplane repeated the raids on towns and cities of Idlib countryside. Binnish town was targeted with several airstrikes one of which hit Binnish Surgical Hospital and it went out of service. The bombardment also inflicted several schools in the town and they suspended work. One female child was killed and seven persons wounded.

The attacks in June 2018 were as response to the military offensive on June 9, 2018 carried out by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham HTS¹ and Jaysh al-Ahrar² against several points in both towns of Kafriya

¹ On January 28, 2017, several jihadist factions in northern Syria announced the merger under the name Hayat Tahrir al-Sham-HTS. These factions are: Jabhat Fateh al-Sham- formerly al-Nusra Front, Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement, Liwaa al-Haqq, Ansar al-Din Front, Jaish al-Sunnah, and Ansar al-Sham Islamiyya Movement. However, after the outbreak of recent confrontations between Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya and HTS in the north of Syria July 15, 2017, Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement announced its separation from HTS on July 20, 2017.

² Jaysh al-Ahrar was formed in November 2016 and is considered to be the one of the most military factions of the opposition forces in the north of Syria. The commander is Abu Saleh at-Tahhan who hails from Taftanaz city in Idlib countryside and takes Taftanaz as the main headquarter. Jaysh al-Ahrar is the second military factions in northern Syria from power and number after Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). It is as well one of the responsible for “points” surrounding Kafriya and al-Fu'ah which were controlled by Syrian regular forces.

and al-Fu'ah³, which were controlled by the Syrian regular forces at the time. The offensive had killed six fighters of the militias loyal to the Syrian regular forces, the field researcher of STJ stated.

The field researcher indicated that the military offensive against towns and cities of Idlib province did not stop until August 2018 because the Syrian regular forces and their allies continued shelling several towns and villages in the southern countryside of Idlib such as Khan Sheikhoun, the east countryside of Ma'arat al-Nu'man, and at least 4 civilians were killed including two babies in al-Tah and Khan Sheikhoun on August 10, 2018. STJ had prepared a [report](#)⁴ on the incident, in addition to another [report](#)⁵ on the massacre carried out in Zardana town on June 8, 2018, that claimed lives of at least fifty persons, including women and children, and wounded more than eighty others as a result of shelling a residential neighborhood in the town.

³ On July 18th 2018, an agreement was reached between Syrian Regular Forces and their allies on one side, and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham on the other in Kafriya and al-Fu'ah, which were affiliated to the Syrian Regular Forces. This agreement stated that Shia militias are to withdraw from the two towns of Kafriya and al-Fu'ah, allow those who desire to stay to do so. In return, releasing 1500 detainees from the jails of the Syrian Regular Forces. The agreement also stated that 37 HTS fighters, who were captured by Syrian Regular Forces in Al Sayeda Zeynap areas, additionally, releasing other four people who were detained in al-Fu'ah town.

⁴ "Deaths in Aerial Bombardment by Syrian Regular Forces on Different Parts South of Idlib", STJ, August 13th 2018, last visit (August 13th 2018), <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/672>

⁵ "At Least 50 Persons Killed in a Horrific Massacre Against Residents of Zardana Town- Idlib Countryside", STJ, July 9th 2018, last visit (August 13th 2018), <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/622>



First: Shelling Civilians' Houses for Three Consecutive Days in Idlib Countryside

On July 9, 2018, the armed Syrian opposition factions, presented in Ansar al-Islam, Forsan al-Iman and Mujahidi Jabal al-Turkman⁶ launched a blitz attack against the Syrian regular forces in Latakia countryside specifically in Rabee'ah area, Shalaf Castle, and both towns of Durra and al-Atriya [killing](#) about twenty-five fighters of the Syrian regular forces and injuring about 40 others, in addition to seizure of the observation points of the regular forces in these axis after direct control over them. The hostilities also caused the death of two fighters of Ansar al-Islam and the injury of three others. Following the completion of the mission, Ansar al-Islam and Mujahidi Jabal al-Turkman withdrew to their areas located in the west of Jisr al-Shughour.

On the second day of the military operation on July 10, 2018, the warplanes of the Syrian regular forces launched raids on towns and villages of the western countryside of Idlib such as Rami, Orum, al-Joz, Bani Izz Church, Meshmeshan, and Basbaqoul. The warplanes also bombarded Bedama town located in the countryside of Jisr al-Shughour, killing 6 civilians including a child and three women, in addition to wounding 16 persons including seven women and two children as well as a member of the Civil Defense. Mohammed Omar, a worker in one of the medical posts in Jisr al-Shughour area confirmed this to STJ and said,

"At 08:00 am on July 10, 2018, the Syrian warplanes Sukhoi 21 and 22 launched several airstrikes on the towns and villages of Idlib countryside and Jisr al-Shughour countryside and the villages of Jabal al-Zawiyah in Idlib countryside; the airstrikes continued until 10:00 of the same day and targeted civilians' houses. At the hospital, we received more than 15 injuries some of them were serious and were transferred the border hospitals with Turkey. Six persons were documented killed on the same day because of the consecutive airstrikes."

⁶ Factions that were formed late in 2017 following defection from the group of Habjat Al Nusra formerly. The major part of them headed to Jabal al-Turkman as it became their military headquarter. These factions are considered responsible for the fighting points in Jabal al-Turkman, the border area with Turkey. The members' number within these factions is about 3,000. They have coordination with the rest of the armed opposition factions in Idlib province. These factions are the sole responsible ones for the sector of western countryside off Jisr Al Shughour and the "liberated" countryside of Latakia. They work constantly on launching "offensive operations" inside the Syrian Regular Forces held areas in Latakia countryside and Jabal al-Turkman.



An image shows some of the work of the Civil Defense team while hurrying to the strike location in Meshmashan village located in Idlib countryside on July 10, 201. Photo credit: [the Civil Defense in Idlib province](#).

In another testimony by Abu Omar, the supervisor of an observatory of the warplanes in Idlib western countryside, told STJ that at 07:47 am on July 10, 2018, a warplanes affiliated with the Syrian regular forces Sukhoi 22 had taken off from Sheirat airbase located in Homs province and reached the skies of Idlib countryside at 7:55 am and started hovering around the villages of Meshmashan, Bani Izz Church, Rami and villages of Jabal al-Zawiyah. He added:

"We issued a call to the locals to take cautions from the Syrian warplanes since they carry out raids from remote and drop their loads directly, in addition they target several villages during the first sortie and that was what really happened. The aircraft targeted Mesmeshan village with explosive rockets and then it bombarded Bani Izz Church village located in Idlib countryside. After that, it bombarded Rami village in Jabal al-Zawiyah area, then ten minutes later, we got another call that on the same day, a warplane took off from Sho'airat Airbase located in Homs and took the north axis towards the western countryside of Idlib and started to bombard most areas and villages in Idlib province. We had recorded around twenty-five



airstrikes until 02:00 p.m. on that day and that resulted in the death of six persons and the injury of fifteen others."

STJ's field researcher was able to document identities of the civilian deaths in the military offensive against areas in Idlib countryside on July 10, 2018, they are:

- **The dead:**

1. Sidra Mohammed Murad
2. Ahmad al-Abras
3. Sadiqa Arnaout
4. Omar Khalid Houriya
5. Amina Khalid al-Izzo (a kid)
6. An unidentified person

- **The wounds**

1. Khalid al-Izzo (a kid)
2. Yaen Ftimeh (a kid)
3. Ali Mohammed (a kid)
4. Mahmoud Zarzour (a kid)
5. Ghadir Zarzour (a kid)
6. Nour Ftimeh (a female kid)
7. Mohammed al-Izzo, 26 years old.
8. Asmaa ad-Daher, 26 years old.
9. Iman Meho, 24 years old.
10. Abeer al-Izzo, 30 years old.
11. Hind al-Yousef, 30 years old.
12. Khalid al-Abed, 75 years old.

Moreover, on July 11 and 12, 2018, villages located in Jisr al-Shughour were exposed to bombardment by warplanes over two continuous days, causing a huge exodus from villages of Bedama, Najiyah and al-Besheryyah, which were considered conflict lines with the Syrian regular forces. The people proceeded to Jisr al-Shughour city that received about 4000 people who were fearful from shelling their homes. The bombardment was also conjunction with a large exodus from Bani Izz village in Idlib to the nearby villages as a result of the violent shelling the



village was exposed to on July 12, 2018, when the Syrian warplanes targeted the civilians' houses in the town, killing three children and wounding 8 civilians and causing damage to the civilians' property. That was stressed by Mohammed al-Yousef, who hails from Bani Izz in Idlib countryside and he is one of the survivors of these airstrikes. He narrated to STJ concerning the attacks,

"At 11:00 a.m. on July 12, 2018, the Syrian warplanes started bombarding the houses of the locals causing a great fire and destroying many homes including mine. The locals gathered, and we started to work in order to distinguish fires, after that the Civil Defense arrived and worked with us. I lost my mind because my children and my wife were trapped under the rubble. Minutes later, the Civil Defense could pull out my wife, who was wounded, but my children had all passed away. It was one of the toughest and hardest days I had ever experienced. The town has no military headquarters because it is just a small town with 4000 people, and the local council administers the city, besides we have never seen any military sites within the town."



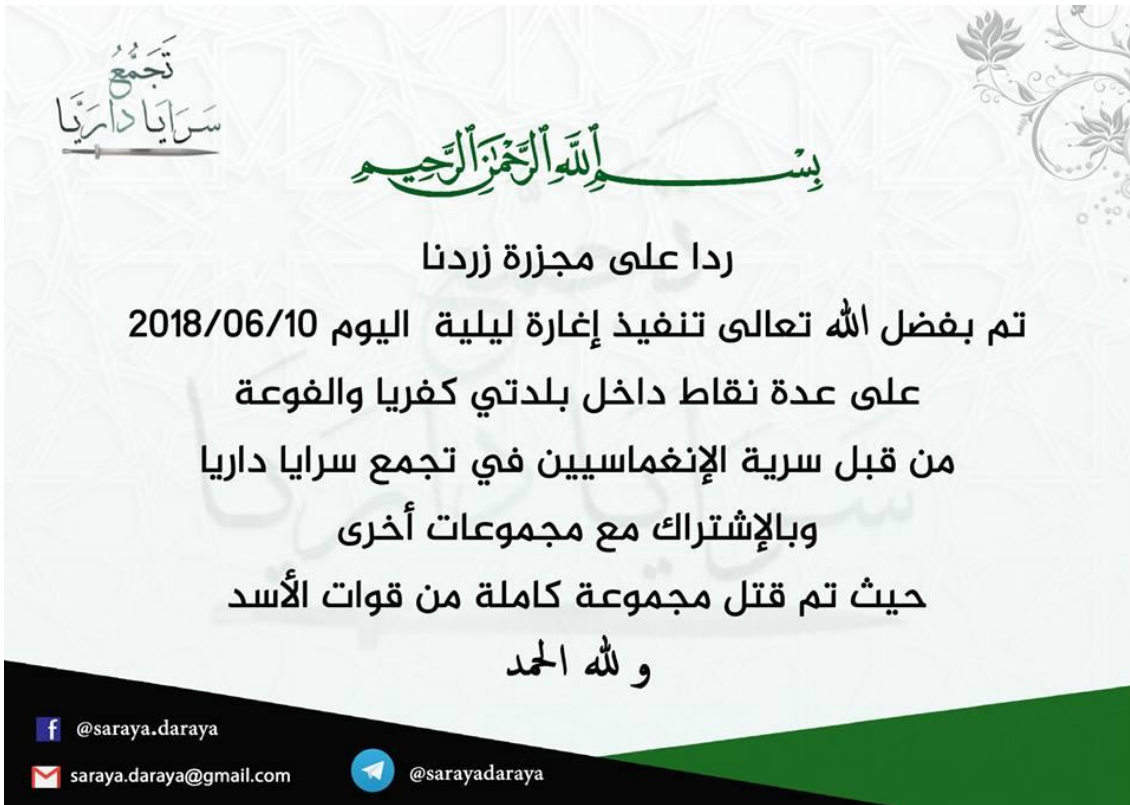
An image shows a side of the process of pulling the deaths and the wounds from under the rubble following the airstrikes that hit Bani Izz Church in Idlib countryside on July 12, 2018. Photo credit: [the Civil Defense in Idlib province](#).

The field researcher of STJ could document identities of the **children** victims who died on July 12, 2018 as a result of the airstrikes on Bani Izz Church town in Idlib countryside. They are:

1. Zainab Mohammed al-Yousef.
2. Rama Hasan al-Yousef.
3. Mohammed Hasan al-Yousef.

Second: A Massacre Claims Lives of 14 Persons in Taftanaz Town

On June 2018, towns and cities of Idlib province witnessed a heavy escalation as the warplane of the Syrian regular forces launched several aerial raids on different parts on the northeastern countryside on June 10, 2018, killing and wounding many civilians. According to STJ's field researcher, the bombardment was a day after clashes between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Jaysh al-Ahrar on the one hand and Syrian regular forces and allied militias on the other, where six fighters of the militias were killed. On June 9, 2018 "Tajamoua Saraya Dariya" faction that is under the banner of HTS announced through its official website that they had carried out an attack on June 10, 2018, against several points within Kafriya and al-Fu'ah where some fighters of the Syrian regular forces-pro militias were killed, declaring that the offensive was a response to the massacre carried out by the Syrian regular forces in Zardana town on June 9, 2018, when many civilians were killed.



An image shows the declaration by Saraya Daraya, which is under the banner of HTS, concerning the attack on June 10, 2018 against several points within Kafriya and al-Fu'ah, which were controlled by the Syrian regular forces. Photo credit: Tajamoua Saraya Dariya

A day after the military offensive, the Syrian regular forces shelled the towns and villages surrounding Kafriya and al-Fu'ah, such as Taftanaz and Binnish. On June 10, 2018, the Syrian air force bombarded Taftanaz⁷ with two airstrikes, killing fourteen persons, including children and women. One of the strikes inflicted al-Nour Specialist Hospital for Children causing it to be out of service completely. The hospital was providing health and medical care for children for free, and was one of the most important hospitals that provide services to estimated 300 monthly situations being giving health care for children or operation for women.

Mohammed al-Ahmad, one of the medical personnel in al-Nour Specialist Hospital for Children described to STJ that the attack occurred at 10:30 a.m. on June 10, 2018, and he continued:

"The Syrian warplanes launched two airstrikes on the town, one of them hit the hospital and the other targeted a civilian's home. The bombardment caused considerable damage to the

⁷ Jaysh al-Ahrar controls Taftanaz town.

hospital and fires set in the ambulances. I remember I was close to the strike location, it was only fifty meters away, but I fell to the ground floor by the extreme pressure caused by the rocket. If I had not fallen to the ground floor, I would have been dead now. A state of fear and panic affected everyone who was present at the hospital being nurses or visitors. There were five children needed to be placed in the incubators, so calls for rescue teams started to evacuate the children and depart all the patients within the hospital fearful of another attack by the warplane. Fourteen persons were documented killed in this attack on that day, including four unidentified bodies since their bodies were charred."



An image shows some of the devastation inflicted to al-Nour Specialist Hospital for Children located in Taftanaz town following an aerial bombardment on June 10, 2018. Photo credit: STJ

Jasim Hussein al-Khalid, an eyewitness from Taftanaz told STJ that for about seven months ago, he had displaced from western Aleppo countryside to Taftanaz and settled in a neighborhood south of the town, and on June 10, 2018 specifically at 10:07 a.m. he heard through the Walkie Talkie a circulation warning from a warplane.

He added,



"Immediately, I hurried along with my wife and children to shelter in one of the shelters close to my house; moments later, we heard a huge explosion and dust filled the air and the whole place. Minute later, the Civil Defense arrived to the strike location and my house was so much destroyed because the rocket had fallen near it. Fortunately, none of my family got hurt."



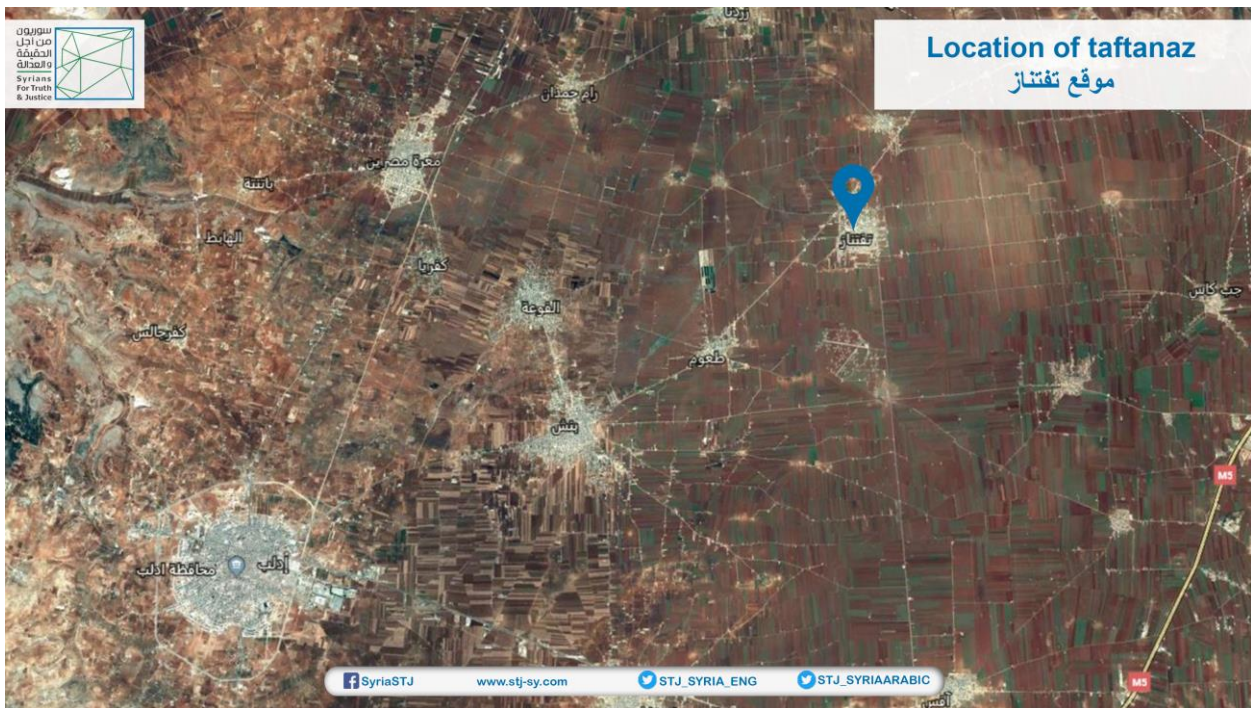
An image shows the house of the witness Jasim al-Khalid located in Taftanaz town following an aerial bombardment on June 10, 2018. Photo credit: STJ

Abu Omar, a supervisor on an observatory of warplanes in Taftanaz town narrated to STJ that at 10:00 a.m. on June 10, 2018, he spotted the arrival of a Sukhoi 22 to the airspace of Taftanaz. According to the observatories that informed him, the aircraft had taken off from Hama Military Airbase.

"As soon as the aircraft reached the skies of Taftanaz, we circulated to the residents and the health centers, but moments later, the warplane carried out two airstrikes one of them targeted al-Nour Specialist Hospital for Children, whereas the second one targeted the civilians' house in the town, causing a massacre that claimed lives of 14 persons. As usual, we appealed to the rescue teams and the Civil Defense to move to the strike location and attempt to save the civilians and the trapped from under the rubble." He confirmed.



An image showing some of the destruction inflicted to the civilians' houses in Taftanaz town following an aerial bombardment on June 10, 2018. Photo credit: STJ





Visual Evidence Analysis



STJ's field researcher was able to document identities of some of the civilian victims who died a result of the violent bombardment on Taftanaz on June 10, 2018. They were,

1. Ayman Zedan
2. Ahmad Shali
3. Abderrahim Sattouf
4. Shahad Sattouf (a kid)
5. Ghalia Sattouf (a kid)
6. Mohammed Abdurrahman Sattouf (a kid)
7. Yousef Abdurrahman Sattouf (a kid)
8. Hussein Abdurrahman Sattouf (a kid)
9. Yasmin al-Abdullah
10. Suzan al-Hes

According to STJ's field researcher, the aerial bombardment was not limited to Taftanaz town; on July 10, 2018, warplanes, likely of the Russian air force, targeted the southern neighborhood in Areeha city, and resulted in death of two kids (Zahra'a Sarmini and Amina Sarmini). It also resulted in four injuries along with destruction of citizens' property.

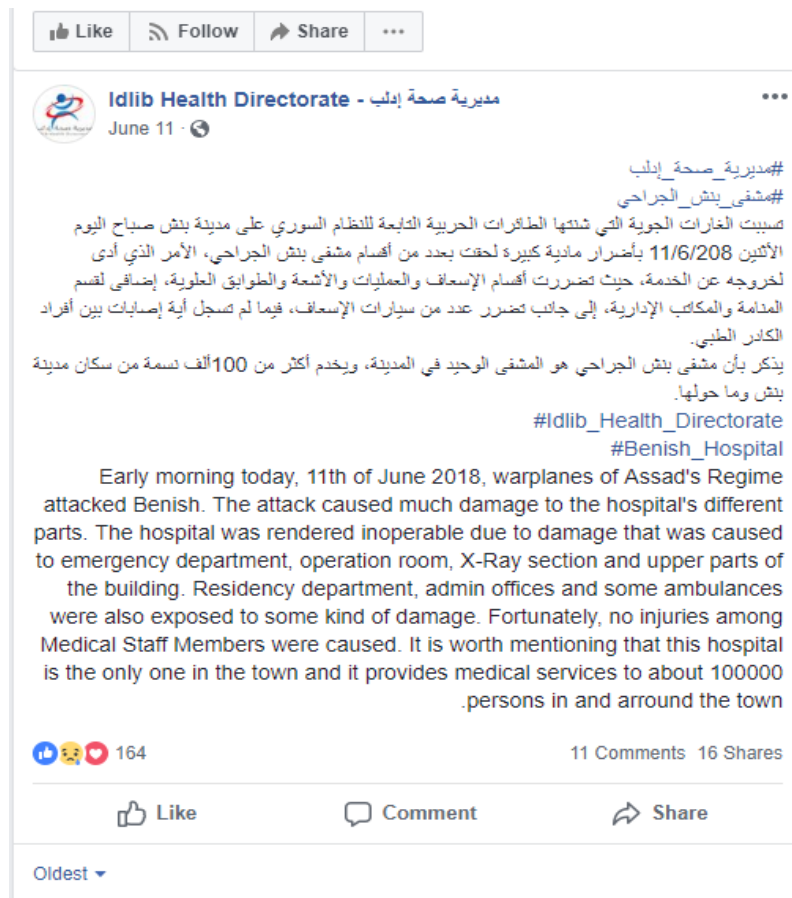
Third: Shelling Takes Binnish Surgical Hospital and Many Schools Out of Service:

On the day after the heavy bombardment on Taftanaz town, specifically on July 11, 2018, the warplanes repeated targeting most towns and villages in Idlib countryside, where Binnish town had the major part of this bombardment as many air strikes were launched on it, resulting in death of one female kid, and injury of seven persons. The aerial bombardment also targeted Binnish Surgical Hospital and resulted in taking it out of service completely. Moreover, the aerial bombardment targeted many schools in the town and causing remarkable damage in the schools buildings and furniture.



One of Binnish Surgical Hospital doctors told STJ that at 11:00 a.m. on July 11, 2018, the warplanes launched multiple air strikes where one of them targeted Binnish Surgical Hospital, and others targeted the schools of the town.

“This bombardment came as a reaction on the offensive launched by opposition factions in many points inside the towns of Kafraya and al-Fu’a that were held by the regime forces. One day after an-Nour Specialist Hospital for children in Taftanaz went out of service, the warplanes targeted the town of Binnish by two air strikes, one of them on Binnish Surgical Hospital and resulted in death of one female kid and taking the hospital out of service, bearing in mind that Binnish Surgical Hospital is a specialist hospital for internal, urology, and peds surgery and was active to provide services to more than 80,000 people in the city and the surrounding areas. Currently, the medical condition deteriorated as it went out of service”, he added.



An image shows that Idlib Health Directorate declares that Binnish Surgical Hospital went out of service following being targeted by aerial bombardment on July 11, 2018. Image Credit: [Idlib Health Directorate](https://www.facebook.com/IdlibHealthDirectorate/)

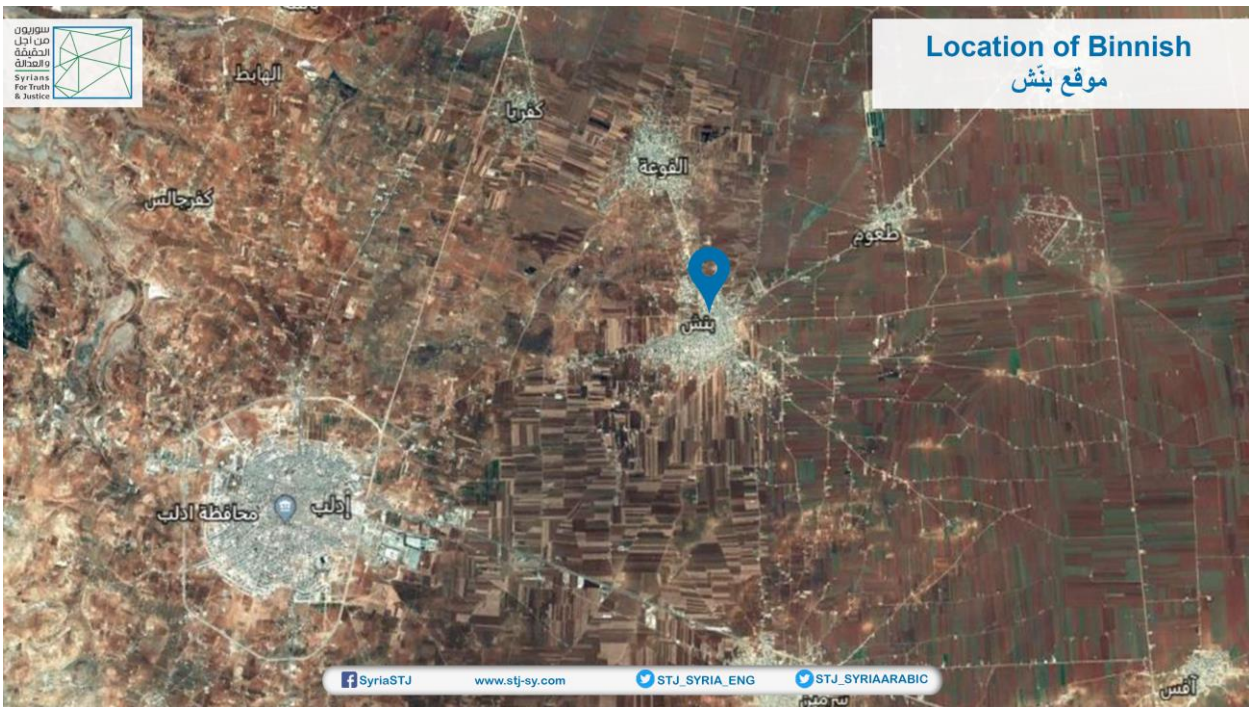
In another testimony by Mohammad Maznouq, who is one of the education staff in Binnish school, told STJ that at 10:00 a.m. on July 11, 2018, Syrian Regular Forces warplanes targeted the town with many air strikes, and each one with four rockets at one time, and targeted the following schools; Al Risala High School, Asaad Aldani High School, Binnish High Schools for Females, and Mamdouh Shu'aib High School.

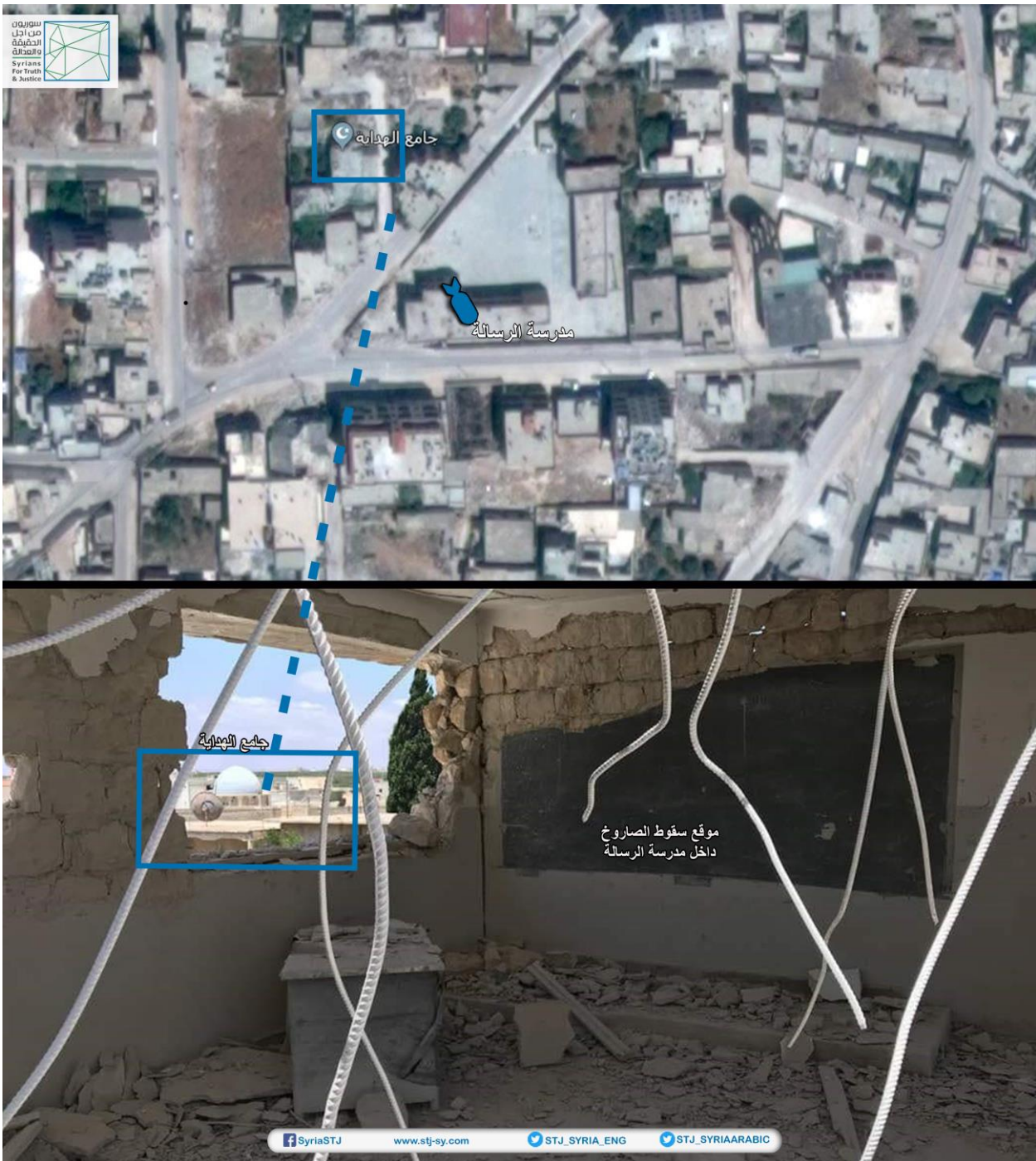
“These schools were including more than one thousand students and seventy teachers. This bombardment resulted in considerable material damage; the schools walls and fence were destroyed, doors and restrooms were fractured. Huge amounts are needed to repair such damages, and we are not able to secure them and rehabilitate those schools in order to receive students in the coming school year. Due to this bombardment, more than 1000 students became without education, which worsening education in the town. Thank God no human collateral were reported as the bombardment took place in out-of-school-hours” he added.





An image shows the destruction of the schools in Binnish town, Idlib countryside following being aerially bombed on July 11, 2018. Image Credit: STJ





Visual Evidence Analysis