

Civilian Deaths due to Warplanes Shelling Buses for Internally Displaced on Aleppo-Damascus International Highway

“The Observatories Informed that a Sukhoi 25 Aircraft Fired many Rockets at a Displaced Convoy on February 2, 2018.”



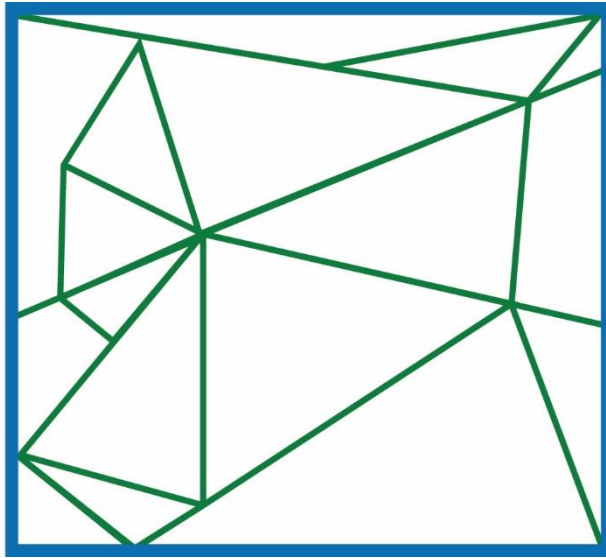
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[Syrians for Truth and Justice /STJ](#) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental, independent Syrian organization. STJ includes many defenders and human rights defenders from Syria and from different backgrounds and affiliations, including academics of other nationalities.

The organization works for Syria, where all Syrians, without discrimination, should be accorded dignity, justice and equal human rights.

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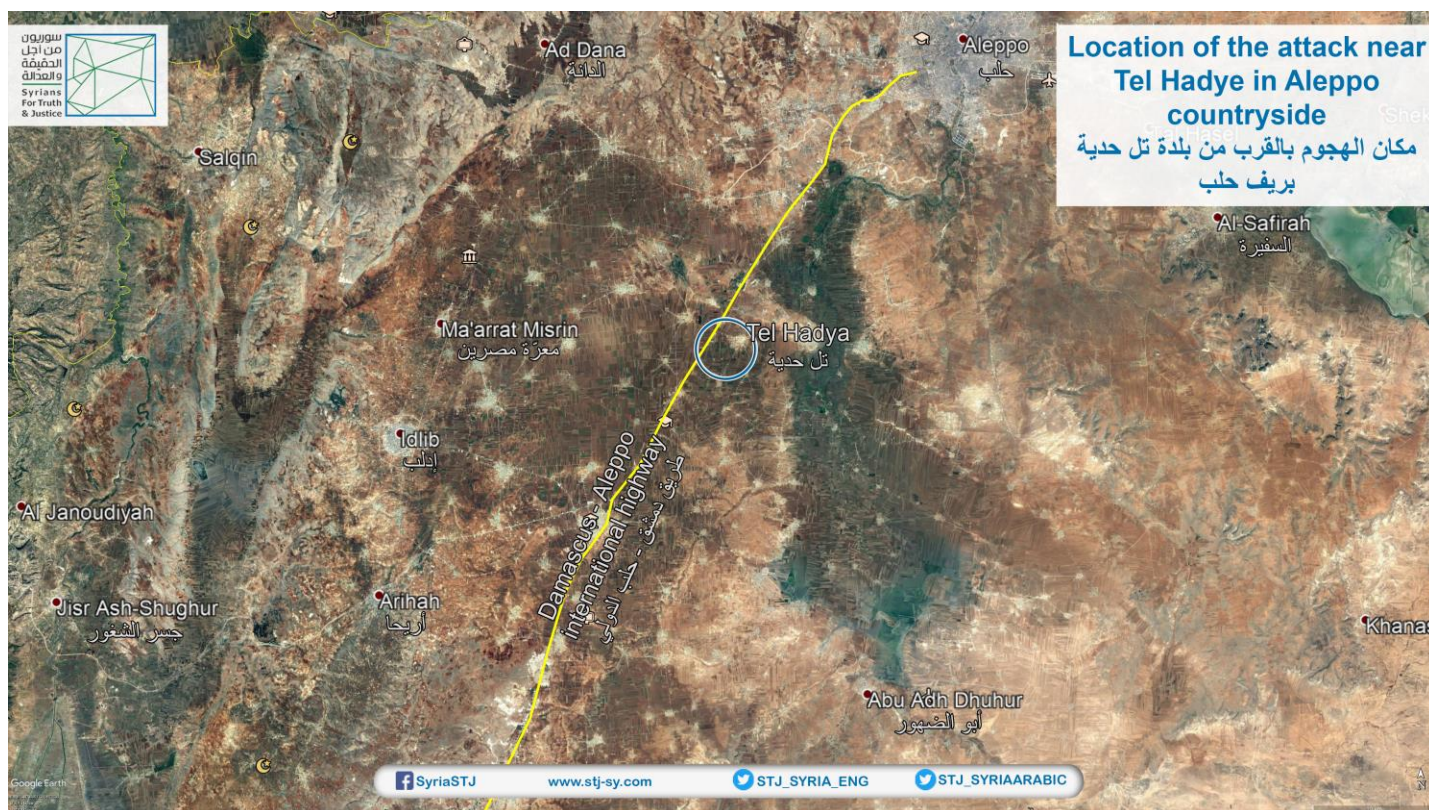
Preface

At least 8 internally displaced persons were killed and others injured, following bombardment of buses transporting dozens of displaced persons on Aleppo-Damascus international highway near [Tal Hadya](#) town on February 2, 2018. According to [Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ](#) field researcher, a warplane believed to be Russian--and depending on many observatories-- had dropped several C-5 rockets on the road while buses of the displaced were passing through from the southern countryside of Aleppo towards the western countryside of Aleppo, that caused casualties among civilians, as well as broke out big fire in the buses.

According to STJ field researcher, Aleppo-Damascus international highway was transformed into a semi-free road from the displaced buses following the latest attack, which lead many displaced persons to flee the intensity of the military operations¹ in their villages in the eastern countryside of Idlib and the southern countryside of Aleppo to secondary and long ways in order to reach safer areas in the western countryside of Aleppo and the northern countryside of Idlib.

It is noteworthy that a part of Aleppo-Damascus international highway is under the control of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham/former Nusra Front, as its controlled areas stretch from Al-Rashedeen area in the western countryside of Aleppo to the outskirts of Saraqib in the southern countryside of Idlib, where Saraqib Revolutionary Front controls the international road which goes through the city.

¹ This escalation came from the Syrian regular forces side, following Hayat Tahrir al-Sham /al-Nusra front controlled the village of Abu Dali in the north-east countryside of Hama province on October 9, 2017,.However, the Syrian regular forces, backed by the Russian Air Force, were able to wrest this village, as well as several villages in the northern countryside of Hama, on December 29, 2017. Syrian regime forces and their allies were able to advance towards south-east Idlib countryside, where they took control of several villages such as Atshanah, Khwayen and Sinjar, on January 7, 2018, with the aim of arriving at the Abu Dhahor military airport in the south-eastern countryside of Idlib. According to STJ researchers, the military operations resulted in controlling the airport by the Syrian government forces and their allied militias on January 27, 2018.



Satellite image illustrates the location of the attack and the international highway between Aleppo and Damascus.

First: Details of the incident

According to STJ reporter, a warplane believed to be a Russian-type (Sukhoi-25) had taken off from Hmeimim military base in Latakia province, and according to several observatories monitor the movement of military aircraft that carried out the attack on the Aleppo-Damascus international highway while buses of the displaced were trying to cross into safer areas, carrying their cattle and agricultural machinery, which had been completely burnt as a result of the attack.

Abu Yasser, a displaced who was near the site of the attack, spoke to STJ about what happened, he said:



"I displaced recently with my family from Tel Daman village in Aleppo, due to the heavy shelling that Syrian and Russian warplanes conducted. However, because we took cattle and sheep with us, we had to set up our tents near Aleppo-Damascus international highway, which was taken by most of the displaced civilians to Aleppo western countryside and northern countryside of Idlib. At about 12:00 pm on February 2, 2018, warplanes targeted the international road with high-explosive rockets caused fire, away (200) meters from our tents, and casualties among the displaced people who were taking the road, so we were compelled to leave and move again with our families and sheep to the western countryside of Aleppo fleeing the bombardment.

In another testimony of a displaced from Tal Aloush town in the southern countryside of Aleppo, who was the first to reach the attacked site, spoke to STJ saying:

"About a month ago, I displaced with my family from Tal Aloush in the southern countryside of Aleppo, because of the barrel bombs shelling, besides intensive raids, which destroyed most of the civilian homes in the town. Anyway, we first fled to the town of Hour al-Aiss, near our town, where we stayed (20 days), and then we were forced to flee again due to exposing Hour al-Aiss to raids of warplanes and artillery, that drove us to flee to the western countryside of Aleppo and cross the international highway. In the afternoon of February 2, 2018, when we arrived at Tal Hadya roundabout to the east of this road, I saw wounded and dead laid on the land, and there were also two buses burning, in which people died, I was shocked by the horror I saw, so I immediately left the place and took the sub-roads for fear of being targeted again."



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Images show a side of the fire caused by shelling a convoy of displaced persons on the Aleppo-Damascus international highway on February 2, 2018.

Photo credit: [Zreba media office](#).

A [video footage](#) published by Orient channel on February 3, 2018, showed deaths and injuries as a result of targeting warplanes displaced cars on the Aleppo-Damascus international highway.

According to STJ reporter, there were eight internally displaced civilians dead, including a child, as well as dozens of wounded, the dead identified as:

1. Abdullah Ali al-Muhammad from Kaosnya town in Aleppo countryside.
2. Turki Alahmad al-Awyed from al-Buwaydah town in Aleppo countryside.
3. Mukhlef Al-Ahmad from Tal Hadya village in Aleppo countryside.
4. Anwar Jumaa al-Ramadan from al-Buwaydah town in Aleppo countryside.
5. Rahaf Mahmoud al-Ali/female child/ from al-Buwaydah town in Aleppo countryside
6. Mayada Ali al-Mohammad /woman from Kaosnya village in Aleppo



- 7 .Ruba Satouf al Al-Awyed /woman from al-Buwaydah town in Aleppo.
- 8.Lamia Halabi/ woman from Tal Hadya village in Aleppo countryside.

According to STJ, it was not the first time that Syrian regular forces and their allies shelled Aleppo-Damascus international highway. Anyway, it was only hours after the first attack, Aleppo-Damascus international high was targeted two consecutive times by a warplane believed to be Russian with C5-type rockets, which resulted in burning large number of displaced buses, without human casualties.

On January 30, 2018, at about 09:00 p.m. warplanes, believed to be Russian, targeted the same road by incendiary substances, with no civilian casualties either.

Second: Aleppo-Damascus International Highway is Free from Convoys of Displaced

Following the repeated attacks recently on Aleppo-Damascus international highway by the Syrian regular forces and its allies, this road, which was considered the only outlet for civilians fleeing violent shelling, is almost empty, as displaced persons from the southern villages of Aleppo started to take sub and long roads to reach safely to the villages of the western countryside of Aleppo.



Image shows Aleppo-Damascus international highway almost empty of the buses of the displaced that it previously used to go through, taken on February 5, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



The continued military campaign launched by Syrian regular forces and their allies in a number of cities and towns of Idlib province, starting from October 2017, with attempts to control villages and towns in the northern countryside of Hama and then other villages and towns in the eastern and southern countryside of Idlib, which caused massive displacement by the people due to heavy shelling on their villages in those areas. According to several sources, the number of displaced persons from Aleppo southern countryside and Idlib eastern countryside reached about 350 thousand internally displaced persons since the onset of the military campaign, as those displaced travelled to safer areas in Aleppo western countryside and border areas in the northern countryside of Idlib, such as the towns of Atmeh and Sarmada, according to STJ reporter.
