

**Despite the Announcement of the “Ceasefire Agreement in Syria”,
Violations Continue as Sustained Attempts Are Made to Assault
Ghouta**

**As ceasefire guarantors Turkey and Russia should support UN Security
Council efforts to put a mechanism in place to hold the perpetrators
accountable for violations**



Image of the corpse of a child killed in shelling on Duma on December 29, 2016.

Date of image December 30, 2016.

Photo credit: Duma Coordination/Photographer: Mohamad Badra

On Thursday 29, December 2016, on the eve of the ceasefire agreement in Syria, Eastern Ghouta, located in the outskirts of Damascus, witnessed a series of raids and violent attacks targeting [Duma](#), [Zamalka](#), [Hamoryah](#) and [Saqba](#) that resulted in dozens of [victims](#) either being killed or [wounded](#). One of the missiles fell on the Fajr As-sbah kindergarten, but there no one was killed because the pupils had left. Another airstrike on a residential area near the Al-Hashmya school in the Al-Sharqya neighborhood, located in Duma, however, caused many casualties. Video footage posted by the Medical Office for Duma following the attack [showed](#) many of wounded, including children. The total death toll from the airstrike was seven. The deaths include two children, one of whom was reported as Ranim Mohamad Shahrur, and two teachers, reported as Samah Mohamad Sharur and Yasin Anas.

Another attack on Duma followed at 3:34 pm, which targeted a public square. The warplanes struck with four missiles at high altitude. The first missile targeted “al-Mojahedin Square,” also known as the “square of sheep.” The square is the main food and vegetable market, crowded with shops, stalls and passers-by. The second missile fell on a house and killed an elderly woman, reported as Safaa Bakura, and three children, reported as Basheer Bashar Attum, Jana Bashar Attum and Naseem Bashar Attum. The third missile targeted the Hassan al-Basry school with no casualties reported. The final missile targeted [Abo Ar-Rahj Mosque](#), near a vegetable market [in the center of Duma](#). An attack with cluster munitions followed and killed two more people.

Activists from inside Duma city said to [Syrians for Truth and Justice](#) that the number of victims that day reached 14 in Duma alone and more than 20 in the whole Eastern Ghouta region, four of them in Erbeen city, due to the targeting a [primary school](#) by Syrian/Russian forces, as well as the dozens of wounded in towns and cities in the Ghouta.



Image of Salam, a Syrian child who survived Syrian/Russian shelling on Duma city.
Photo credit, the Medical Office for Duma. December 29, 2016



Image of the impact site, December 2106, showing “Abo Ar-Rahj mosque.”
Photo credit: Duma Coordination.

At midnight, Friday 30, December 2016, after [the ceasefire agreement](#) brokered by Turkey and Russia took effect, cautious calm prevailed in all towns and cities in the Eastern Ghouta. Then in the early morning, entering from the Homs Highway and Karm Ar-Rasas Highway, Syrian troops attempted to break into Duma backed with five tanks and a troop carrier. Clashes then began between the Syrian army and armed opposition forces, with coordinated bombing of the combat zones by up to 40 mortar and artillery shells by the Syrian army, with many falling on neighborhoods in Duma, according to eyewitnesses.

Concerning this attack, Omar Abo Imad, an activist from Duma told Syrians for Truth and Justice:

“Since the first day of the truce, the regime forces have targeted civilians with snipers and killed a young man, Omar Mwafaq Shehab, in the outskirts of the city as well as targeting the city with 23mm heavy machine gun in the evening”.

Military and shelling operations were not only limited to Duma on the first day of the truce, however. The regime forces also hit the Al Marj area in Eastern Ghouta with six ground-to-ground rockets, injuring many individuals. (Syrians for Truth and Justice could not get access to any additional information about the attack details or the nature of the target goal.) Many clashes between the regime forces and the armed opposition also took place in the Al-Bharya Front. A young man, Yousef Jlda Abo Zuheir from Al-Nashabya town, who was fighting in the ranks of Jaysh al-Islam, was killed.

Other clashes took place in al-Mid’aani Front, where the combatant Abo Anas from Failaq Ar-Rahman was killed. In addition, several mortar shells by the regime forces fell on Jisreen, Ein Tarma, Mesraba and al-Shifouniyah towns, but with no casualties.

Several artillery shells are also documented as falling on Jisreen at about 9:30 am local time, injuring many civilians. The source of fire was the regime-controlled Al-Malihah town.

Six “rocket launcher” munitions are also documented as falling on the al-Mid’aani area at 2:40 pm local time. The strike targeted a military zone and killed four armed opposition combatants.

A mortar shell registered falling on Ein Tarma at about 8: 00 pm. Also a Vozdika artillery weapon fell on Mesraba and another on al-Shifouniyah, but with no casualties.

On Saturday 31, December 2016, the second day of the cease-fire, Duma was hit with an artillery shell at 12:40 am then again with 23 mm artillery at 3:20 am. Other artillery shells fell on Al-Marj villages (and targeted opposition-held military zones) at about 1:00pm that killed a combatant and wounded another. Also at 10:55 pm, a mortar shell fell on Harasta. The source of the shell was the regime-held Harasta suburb.

Violent clashes took place on the al-Mid’aani front, coordinated with shelling from Hazrama by the regular Syrian army. In total, the clashes saw dozens of artillery shells, three aerial raids by cluster munitions, and many wounded.

Armed opposition- affiliated Jaysh Al-Islam posted [video footage](#) showing clashes that resisted the attempts to break into Ghouta by the regime forces.

The same day as numerous mortar shells by regime forces from the Karam al-Rasas region fell on Duma, eyewitnesses told Syrians for Truth and Justice, they also fell on Al'Ajami, located in Harasta.

These and other violations that took place in many Syrian territories like in Wadi Barada have led armed opposition factions to demand the guarantors state to the ceasefires, particularly Russia, stop such attacks. While bombardment did ease in the evening at 8:00 pm local time, the clashes did not stop.

On Sunday 1, January 2017, at about 12:20 am, a mortar shell fell on Halab Street near Kahlous Mosque located in Duma, but no casualties were reported. One mortar shell also fell on Ein Tarma at the same time.

The regime forces continued assault attempts from the axis of the al-Mid'aani Front, according to activists, also hitting Duma city with a mortar shell and killing Mohamad Sa'eed Rahim al-Shifoni..

At 2:20pm several artillery shells from the regime-operated Management of Vehicles fell on some residential areas in Harasta, resulting in [fires breaking out](#). In addition, the regime forces indiscriminately struck the farms surrounding Jisreen and Ein Tarma towns.

On Monday 2, January 2017, the regime forces indiscriminately targeted Al-Marj with more than 25 artillery shells, including violent artillery bombing and clearing with heavy anti-aircraft weapons, with coordinated attempts to break into the region from al-Mid'aani and Al-Bharya While clashes took place in al-Mohamdya Farms between armed opposition factions and the regular army which could capture two points in Al- Bharya Front under heavy fire covering.

At 4:45 pm, the regular forces targeted the Hazrama town located in Al-Marj with artillery shells and killed an armed opposition fighter. Clashes also took place in Duma due to attempts by the regime forces to advance from the side of Adra Prison for Women.

The local council of Al-Marj located in Eastern Ghouta had previously released on January 2, 2017, a statement regarding the regular forces violations. The council demanded that International Observer Mission be sent to monitor the ceasefire agreement.



بيان صادر عن المجلس المحلي في منطقة المريج بخصوص خروقات النظام للهدنة التي تم التوقيع عليها مؤخراً

بعد توقيع اتفاق وقف إطلاق النار الذي تم برعاية روسية تركية تفاءلنا خيراً بإمكانية وقف شلال الدم الجاري في منطقتنا والناجم عن حملة عسكرية عنيفة يشنها النظام وميليشياته الأجنبية وعليه فإن منطقة المريج والتي تعتبر ذات موقع استراتيجي هام في الغوطة وهي السلة الغذائية لكافة أهالي الغوطة الشرقية ومنذ بداية الثورة تتعرض منطقتنا لأعنف الحملات الهجومية والقصف المستمر الذي لا يرحم لا البشر ولا الحجر ومازالت هذه الحملات الشرسة تستهدف المنطقة حتى بعد إصدار قرار وقف إطلاق النار الذي تبناه مجلس الأمن بتاريخ 31 / 12 / 2016م حيث أنه لم يتغير شيء على الأرض من جهة النظام ومازالت هجمات النظام وميليشياته الأجنبية مستمرة في هجومها حتى هذه اللحظة على قرى وبلدات منطقة المريج وحقت تقدماً برياً على مواقع تحت سيطرة الثوار مستغلين في ذلك التزام الفصائل الثورية المقاتلة في الغوطة الشرقية باتفاق الهدنة المعلن حيث قامت قوات النظام باستخدام كافة أنواع الأسلحة التي طالت الأهالي الأمنيين في مساكنهم مما أسفر عن تهجير عدد كبير منهم وأدى أيضاً لوقوع خمسة شهداء وإصابة عدد من المدنيين مما انعكس سلباً على كافة المجالات الحيوية في المنطقة وخاصة القطاع التعليمي والطبي . وبناءً على ما سبق فإننا في المجلس المحلي لمنطقة المريج نطالب الدول الراعية لإتفاق وقف إطلاق النار بتحمل كامل مسؤولياتها والضغط على النظام والميليشيات الموالية له لوقف جميع الخروقات المستمرة التي يرتكبها النظام وذلك من أجل حماية المدنيين والحفاظ على حياتهم وأيضاً ضمان استمرار وقف إطلاق النار والذي نتمنى أن يكون اللبنة الأولى في الحل السياسي الذي يشمل كامل سوريا الحبيبة. كما ندعو لإرسال مراقبين دوليين لضبط وقف إطلاق النار ونحن مستعدون للتعاون التام معهم وتقديم التقارير اللازمة.

المجلس المحلي في منطقة المريج



Doctor Bakr Mohamad, the director of a medical center in the Middle Sector located in Eastern Ghouta cited his testimony to Syrians for Truth and Justice:

“The number of victims in Eastern Ghouta’s towns and cities since the ceasefire agreement in Syria came into effect until Sunday 2, January 2017, reached seven fighters and two civilians and more than 45 wounded. The bombing intensified on the outskirts of Duma and Al-Marj. Meanwhile warplanes were mounting raids on military front zones in Al-Bahrya and al-Mid’aani among others”.

He added:

” The biggest challenge we face today is the siege imposed on us for four years which resulted in some damage to the medical equipment and our incapacity to replace them. The other challenge is a shortage of the medical staff. Being a gynecologist, I faced problems of congenital malformations and needed a specialist doctor, but there was none”.

Mr. Mohamd Balor, the Managing Director of the Farabi Medical Complex, located in Eastern Ghouta, told Syrians for Truth and Justice that many difficulties lie during performing the same task due to indiscriminate bombardment by the regime forces especially on Al-Marj and Duma. He confirmed that shortage of medical staff, equipment and medicine related to chronic diseases caused many deaths.

On Tuesday 3, January 2017, a mortar shell fell on Duma with no casualties, followed by artillery missiles on civilian neighborhoods at 4:45 pm which killed Mohamd Ahmad al-Barnaw” and wounded seven more. The source of mortar shells was the regime-controlled mountains which overlook the city from the north.

Clashes took place between armed opposition forces and the regular army surrounding the Missile Battalion in Hazrama, seven fighters were killed by sniper fire, according to “Jaysh al-Islam” Media.

Six artillery missiles fell on Al-Marj but there were no casualties. The source of the shell was the regular forces stationed in Damascus International Airport. Again, three artillery missiles from the regular forces stationed in the Air Defense Administration, located in Al-Malihah, fell on residential areas in Ein Terma with no casualties.

At 1:00 pm six artillery missiles targeted the residential areas in Al-Marj towns of Hazrama, Hosh, al-Salhya and Az-Zreqya which caused the death of one civilian and wounded many more.

On Wednesday 4, January 2017, an artillery shell struck Hazrama and al-Salhy on the outskirts of Az-Zreqya, but no casualties were reported..