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## “Neglected Suffering”

A Special report tells stories of the sufferings of some children who left permanently disabled by the war in their hometowns, rural Idlib and Hama

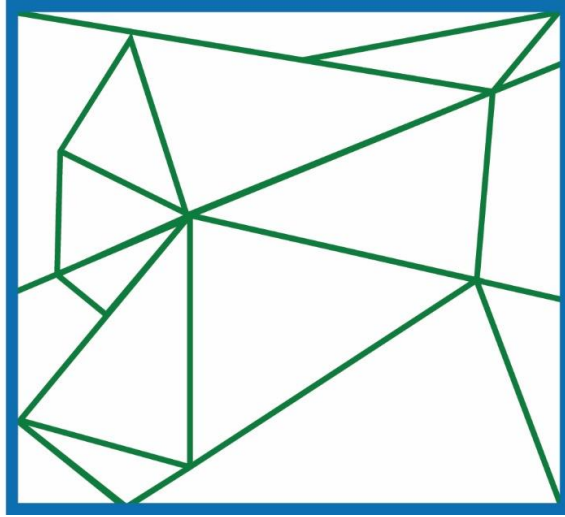
## About the organization (STJ):

[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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## “Neglected Suffering”

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## Preface

After more than seven years of conflict in Syria, children remain the group at greatest disadvantage, as the ongoing violence has not only caused the killing and displacement of many children, but it also resulted in many of them having disabilities and deformities that they will suffer for the rest of their lives. This report aims to recount the stories of children who became disabled and maimed in 2018 and previous years, as a result of bombing their villages and towns in rural Hama and Idlib Governorates, held by the Syrian armed opposition, by Syrian regular forces and their allies, where many of rescued still suffering permanent disabilities and deformities till today, which made their lives worse and made them be no more normal children.

According to a [report](#) issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in March 2018, children with disabilities risk being excluded and forgotten with no end in sight to the war in Syria, where it said that the use of explosive weapons and indiscriminate attacks in densely populated areas have killed a growing number of children who now account for one quarter of civilian deaths. Over 360 children were injured in 2017, leaving many with disabilities. It also noted that an estimated 3.3 million children inside Syria are exposed to explosive hazards including landmines, unexploded ordinance and improvised explosive devices.

While a [report](#) published by the UN on 27 June 2018, noted that the UN had verified the killing of 910 children and maiming of more than 361 others in the course of 2017. Government forces and their allies besides ISIL where the accused of being the perpetrators of most of those casualties.

STJ had earlier prepared a [report](#) on the child victims of UXO, which were mainly used by Syrian regular forces and their allies during the years of the Syrian conflict, specifically in rural Aleppo. The Organization had also prepared another [report](#) on children recruitment and use in military operations by parties to the conflict in Syria.



## **“His peers refuse to play with him because they don’t accept his disfigured face”**

" Mus'ab Abboud al-Mahmoud", a 5-year-old boy, born in Kafar Sijnah village, Idlib southern countryside, has lost mother and been injured with permanent deformity in his face and hands, by bombing his hometown with incendiary weapons, according to his father who spoke to STJ, about the incident happened on 8 February 2018, that changed the course of his life and that of his child, , where he said:

**At 4:00 p.m, I was home while my wife was sitting outside it, just steps from the small tent where a number of children used to gather to be taught literacy. Mus'ab used to frequent this tent, as he loves learning despite his young age. It was only moments before we heard the roar of a warplane approaching the village, immediately the teacher secured the children and placed them in a shelter, but Mus'ab insisted to stay playing next to the tent, ignoring his mother's urgent calls to come home. At that moment when his mother rushed to bring him inside, the warplanes carried out the first raid near our neighbors' house, injuring two girls, one of whom lost her left arm. That was soon followed by another raid, which targeted a place about 10 meters away from us, I felt a huge explosion, so I rushed out and found fire and smoke filling the place, I was speechless when I saw my wife drawing her last breath, and Mus'ab been severely burned in his face and hands, the daughter of one of our neighbors was also injured and lost one of her fingers."**

Mus'ab's father added that the ambulance teams rushed to the scene immediately after the incident and transferred a girl child to Idlib hospital, indicating that he remained beside his wife for burial, while a relative accompanied his child to the hospital, where doctors said that they couldn't provide him treatments because his condition was very serious, so he was transferred to a hospital in the Reyhanlı town located in Turkey, where he underwent a surgery, and got his face and hands fully bandaged. The father goes on to say:

**" Mus'ab stayed at the Reyhanlı Hospital for about a month and a half, and on 18 April 2018, he returned home, but he is currently suffering from a difficult psychological condition**



because of the deformity he got, he also suffers from a manic depression, as he cannot play with his friends because they don't accept his scarred face and keep asking too many questions about the cause which made him look so. We did not tell him that his mother had died by the bombardment, we said that she went to the hospital to receive treatment and will be back soon. Mus'ab keep asking me if these burns and deformities will soon disappear, and I always lied to him saying that they will, but the fact is that they can't be cured easily. Doctors told me that he needs cosmetic operations, which are very expensive and quite frankly I can no longer afford other expenses, and unfortunately no one adopts or donates the cost of these operations for my child .“



Image showing the child "Mus'ab Abboud al-Mahmoud", prior being severely deformed in face and hands.

Photo credit: Mus'ab Abboud al-Mahmoud's family.





Image shows "Mus'ab Abboud al-Mahmoud" following the aerial bombardment of Kafar Sijnah village on 8 February 2018.

Photo credit: Mus'ab Abboud al-Mahmoud's family.



## Barrel bombs killed his two sisters and left him paraplegic

"Hamza Ali al-Yousif", is a 7 years old boy who was also a victim of bombing his hometown, Tal Amara in Idlib countryside, by barrel bombs in late 2017, where the bombardment left him paraplegic for the rest of his life and killed his two sisters. In this connection, Hamza's mother spoke to STJ saying:

**"On the afternoon of 28 December 2017, I was home with my family preparing food, when we heard the roar of a helicopter hovering over our village, its sound started coming closer and closer, but we did not take heed of it and kept exchanging conversations, thinking that it was headed north, but all of sudden it dropped a parallel bomb near our house, it fell on a tractor. At that moment I didn't know what happened, the dust covered the place. A few seconds passed, before I began feel my children, it was a deep shock when I realized that my two young daughters were dead, and a shrapnel in the back injured my son, Hamza. Minutes later people began to come to our house to find out what happened, they took my daughters' bodies out for burial. Despite the heartbreaking and intense situation I was going through, I tried to get over what happened and get around my child Hamza, so I started shouting calling ambulance, one of my relatives took Hamza to the National Hospital in Ma`arat al-Nu`man, where Hamza had been treated for a week."**

Hamza's parents was forced to take him out of the Ma`arat al-Nu`man Hospital in Idlib countryside, due to the heavy bombardment the city was subjected to. Hamaza was diagnosed to have spinal cord laceration caused by the shrapnel, which means that he will be a paraplegic for the rest of his life. After 12 days, Hamza was transferred to a hospital in Aleppo western countryside, where he had a surgery for his leg, which was also injured, where doctors installed metal plates in it, but the shrapnel still lodged in his spinal cord. Hamza's mother said:





The doctors told us that they would not be able to get that shrapnel out for fear of worsening his situation, especially since it was lodged in the spinal cord, which is very sensitive to injury. Hamza is currently living paralyzed, where he can't move by himself, he has deprived from his right to play as his peers do, he keep watching them with sad eyes and try hard to adapt to his new situation, but every now and then, when he can't play with his friends he cries and cries."



Image shows "Hamza Ali al-Yousif", after being paraplegic

Photo credit: Hamza's family.



## “He often wakes up screaming in the middle of the night because of the nightmares he still has”

Ibrahim Hussein al-Amouri, no more than 10, is also a victim of the pro-government forces' bombardment on Hama northern countryside, in late 2017, Ibrahim was severely injured in the leg, following the aerial bombardment on Kafr Zita town, his hometown, is still being bombed almost daily, due to its proximity to the areas of control of Syrian regular forces such as Halfaya. In this regard, Ibrahim's father spoke to STJ saying:

**At 1:00 p.m. on 21 December 2017, I was home with my 6 members family, my wife asked Ibrahim to go to a nearby shop, 200 meters away from our house, to bring some stuff. Minutes after Ibrahim went out, a huge explosion shook the entire neighborhood, we all rushed out of the house to see what happened, there was smoke rising from near the shop where Ibrahim went. My father, brother and I headed to the explosion site. We could barely walk as our knees were shaking fearing for Ibrahim. When we reached the place, we started looking for Ibrahim, there was a vast destruction, we found him near the door of the shop lying on the floor, his body was covered with dust and his leg was seriously injured. We immediately took him to Khan Shaykhun town hospital. When they saw Ibrahim, the doctors said that the injured leg can't be treated and it must be chop off. It was such a deep shock to me, I couldn't believe it. Then I decided to transfer Ibrahim to Khateeb Hospital in Kafr Nabl.”**

"Ibrahim's father added that one of the doctors there, oversaw Ibrahim's treatment, and made him an urgent surgery. Two hours after the operation, the doctor told them that Ibrahim's leg had been eroded by about 10 cm because of the injury, and the amputation was not needed, but he still needs another surgery, which will operate on him after two months until he recovers and his body makes blood, where he lost a lot. Ibrahim stayed in the hospital for treatment until January 2018, and then he was taken to the house, where he remained bedridden for about two months. Ibrahim's father continued by saying:



**“On 7 March 2018, we contacted the surgeon, who told us that the surgery called “Allotransplant” and the graft should be brought from the Turkish city Gaziantep, at our own expense. We sold a piece of the land we have, to secure the required amount of \$3,800. We sent the money to the doctor, who then bought the graft, and operate on Ibrahim, and thank God the operation was successful. However, Ibrahim lost his ability to walk, and he can barely stands up, he is also traumatized, where he often wakes up and yells in the middle of the night with fear and panic, because of the nightmares he still has about the incident he experienced. He can no longer be just a normal child, or go to school and integrate with other children of his age.”**



Image shows the child victim Ibrahim Hussein al-Amouri".

Photo credit: Ibrahim Hussein al-Amouri's family.



## “He refuses to make friends of his age because he feels inferior to them”

"Muhammad Khaled al-Hamada", 12 years, a child from al-Zawar village, Hama countryside, who lost vision in one of his eyes, as a result of bombing his hometown. That prevents Muhammad from attending school, it also made him feel bad and inferior to other children. Muhammad's family suffers a difficult financial situation, and his father do many kinds of manual labour to support his 5 members family, including one with "[Down syndrome](#)". In this regard, Muhammad's father talked to STJ, saying:

**"On the morning of 20 May 2017, Muhammad went to play with his cousin "Ayham" in a place they used to go to. In the afternoon warplanes started hovering over our village. Meanwhile I was home sitting with some relatives, all of sudden, warplanes launched two air strikes using rockets loaded with cluster munitions, I immediately rushed with a group of young men to where Muhammad and Ayham went to look for them. I was shocked when I saw my nephew, "Ayham Sa'adou al-Hamada" lying on the floor, covered with blood, he was dead, while my child Muhammad was injured in his left eye. The young men immediately took the body of "Ayham" to his house in order to bury him, while I transferred my child to a nearby medical point, doctors made every effort and worked for long hours to help Muhammad, but that was useless. They told me that Muhammad's eye could not be healed because it had been badly injured, and they advised me to go to Turkey to speedily undertake remedial action, and actually that's what happened, we went to a hospital in Reyhanlı town, where he underwent surgery in his eye. It took two hours before he was taken out of the operating room, with his eye bandaged with gauze."**

Muhammad's father was deeply shocked, when doctors told him that his child's eye went blind, and that the vision in his other eye was 30% damaged, they also told him that he had to undergo another surgery. About 15 days later, Muhammad and his father returned to the village, but Muhammad was severely distressed, due to the loss of his vision in the left eye. Almost a month later, his father decided to take him to Muhradah city to undergo the surgery there. He sent him with a man who often frequents the city and passes checkpoints without any significant problems, since the city is held by Regime forces. Muhammad's father said:



“The surgery was done to Muhammad's surgical with a success rate of 100%, but Muhammad's happiness was incomplete, because his another eye still blind. I profoundly saddened by what happened to my child, I raised him with high expectations, I hoped him to be a person of interest, a man who hold such an important position one day. However, all I hope now is that Muhammad can overcome all the obstacles, and follow the path of his life as other children. We currently living in the open, within agricultural lands, south of Ltamenah village, after the regular forces took control over our village, al-Zawar, while Muhammad is trying to adapt to his new situation, but he does not favor the companionship of children of his age, because of his feeling of inferiority.”



Image shows the child victim Muhammad Khaled al-Hamada", after losing sight in his eye.

Photo credit: Muhammad Khaled al-Hamada's family.