

Seven Civilians Killed Following Targeting Vehicles Carrying Civilians in Sahl al-Ghab/western Hama Countryside

The Incident Occurred on May 16, 2018, When Government Forces Stationed at Goren Camp Targeted Two Vehicles with "Kornet" Missiles, Killing and Burning all the Passengers

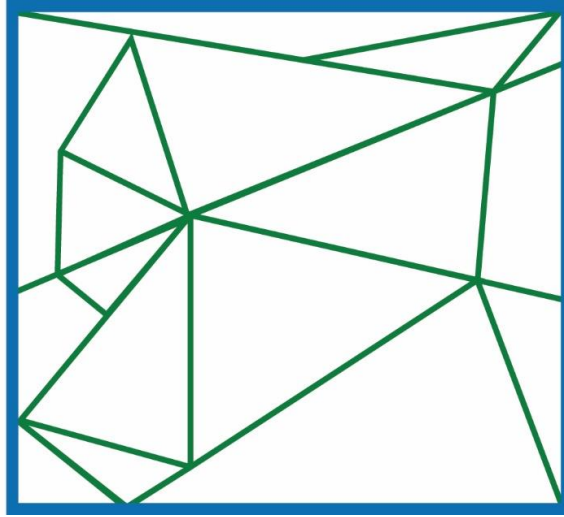
About Syrians for Truth and Justice-STJ

[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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Introduction

Seven civilians were burnt to death on the road to Mansoura village, located in Sahl-al-Ghab (al-Ghab Plain)¹ area in the western countryside of Hama following the Syrian regular forces shelling on May 16, 2018. According to many testimonies obtained by STJ, the Syrian regulars forces stationed at Goreen Camp, located in al-Ghab Plain, targeted the road twice with "Kornet" missiles simultaneously when two cars were passing and were carrying civilians, including women and children, so they all died at the spot.

According to STJ's field researcher, Goreen camp, located in Goreen town, approximately 91 km away from Hama province, is one of the most important and largest military bases of the Syrian regular forces in Hama countryside, because through it, they semi-daily, bombard gatherings of civilians with artillery and rocket launchers in the towns and villages that are out of its control in Hama countryside, such as al-Hawwash, al-Ankawi, Qarqur, and al-Hamraa.

The Syrian regular forces had established the camp in 2012, after it transferred it from an agricultural high School into a camp, the field researcher added.

This attack is in the framework of the Syrian regime-led military campaign to control some villages and towns in Hama countryside since October 2017. STJ had prepared earlier a report highlighting the recent military escalation in Hama countryside; it was entitled "[Attacks with Incendiary Substances on Hama Northern Countryside during April 2018-The Attacks Mainly Targeted Cities of Kafr Zita and al-Lataminah, Hama Countryside.](#)"

STJ also published a report titled "[Bombing Kafr Zita Hospital Deprives Thousands of Locals from its Services, the hospital had undergone several attacks during 2018, the latest of which was on May 2nd.](#)"

¹ The Syrian regime controls a large part of Sahl al-Ghab, whereas some villages like "al-Hawwash, al-Ankawi, Qarqur, and al-Hamraa) are controlled by several factions of the Syrian armed opposition, most notably Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya.

Direction of the rocket firing
اتجاه إطلاق الصواريخ



Location of Mansoura city
موقع بلدة المنصورة



An satellite image showing the location of Green Camp in Hama countryside where the incident occurred.



Details of the incident

Wednesday morning, 16 May 2018, the Syrian regular forces fired several Kornet missiles at two vehicles transporting civilians while crossing the road to Mansoura in al-Ghab Plain. Iyad Abu al-Jood, an activist from western countryside of Hama, confirmed this and said,

"The missiles used were anti-armor (anti-tank) missiles, they caused full burn of the two vehicles, as well as killed all the seven passengers, including women and children. The first vehicle was "pick-up", and belonged to a citizen from Ma'arat Hurmah located in Idlib countryside; a man was driving the truck, he was with his little child. Whereas the second car belonged to civilians from Harem city; a man along with four women were inside it. Both cars burnt completely and the bodies were charred, according to sources that monitored the incident. When the Civil Defense teams hastened to pull out the bodies, the regime forces stationed at Goreen Camp retargeted the impact site but this time with heavy artillery shells, forcing the Civil Defense teams to move away and return later to do their tasks."

Abu al-Jood continued that Goreen camp, or as known as "death camp" is one of the most important points for Syrian regular forces in the Western countryside of Hama; it contains a large military arsenal of machinery and troops, and that the Syrian regular forces had established the camp to fire-control the area from remote. He added:

"In al-Ghab Plain area, there are other several points belonging to the regular forces, especially in the villages of al-Hakoura, Qaber Feda, Shatha among others. al-Ghab Plain is supposed to be an area included in the de-escalation zone agreement as agreed by the Astana Conference, which the Turkish government published, in its light, 12 military points in the countryside of Aleppo, Idlib and Hama, but was preceded by a point overlooking al-Ghab Plain, in the village of Cher Mghar located in Mount Shashbo in Hama countryside. However, the Syrian regime did not adhere to this agreement, on the contrary, its bombardment sometimes coincided with the arrival of patches of displaced people from Eastern Ghouta or from the Southern countryside of Homs, or the Southern countryside of Hama towards the western countryside of Hama."

In another testimony by "Samer Nassar", director of the Civil Defense in Sahl a-Ghab located in the western countryside of Hama, told STJ that they received an appeal through Walkie-talkie in the morning of May 16, 2018, reporting that two civil cars had been targeted on the road to Mansoura village, and in this regard he said:



"We rushed to the impact site, both cars had burned completely, and the bodies were charred leaving no features. Then, we encouraged and went closer to try to pull out the bodies stuck in the car seats; while we were getting the bodies out and put them in special bags, the shells pounded on us, and our gathering was spotted by the regular forces stationed at Goren Camp. Consequently, we were forced to leave and retreat to a remote place where we waited for more than two hours until the situation calmed down and the shelling stopped. After that, we returned back to the impact site, and we found that the cars had been charred, and there was no hope to save anybody inside, as everyone was doomed to be burnt to death because of the missiles that targeted them."



Images show side of the charred bodies of the victims who died after the Syrian regular forces attacked the road to Mansoura on May 16, 2018. Photo credit: image obtained from Samer Nassar, director of the Civil Defense team in al-Ghab Plain.



Samer al-Nassar added that it was difficult to identify the victims the first time, particularly that they had found no documents with them, but hours later and after a big effort, the victims were identified; the first car belonged to a civilian from Ma'arat Hurmah located in Idlib countryside, and it was driven by Ahmed Khalid ash-Shama'a, 45, who was with his seven-year-old kid identified as Khalid Ahmed Khalid ash-Shama'a. Both were going to al-Ghab Plain. Samer continued:

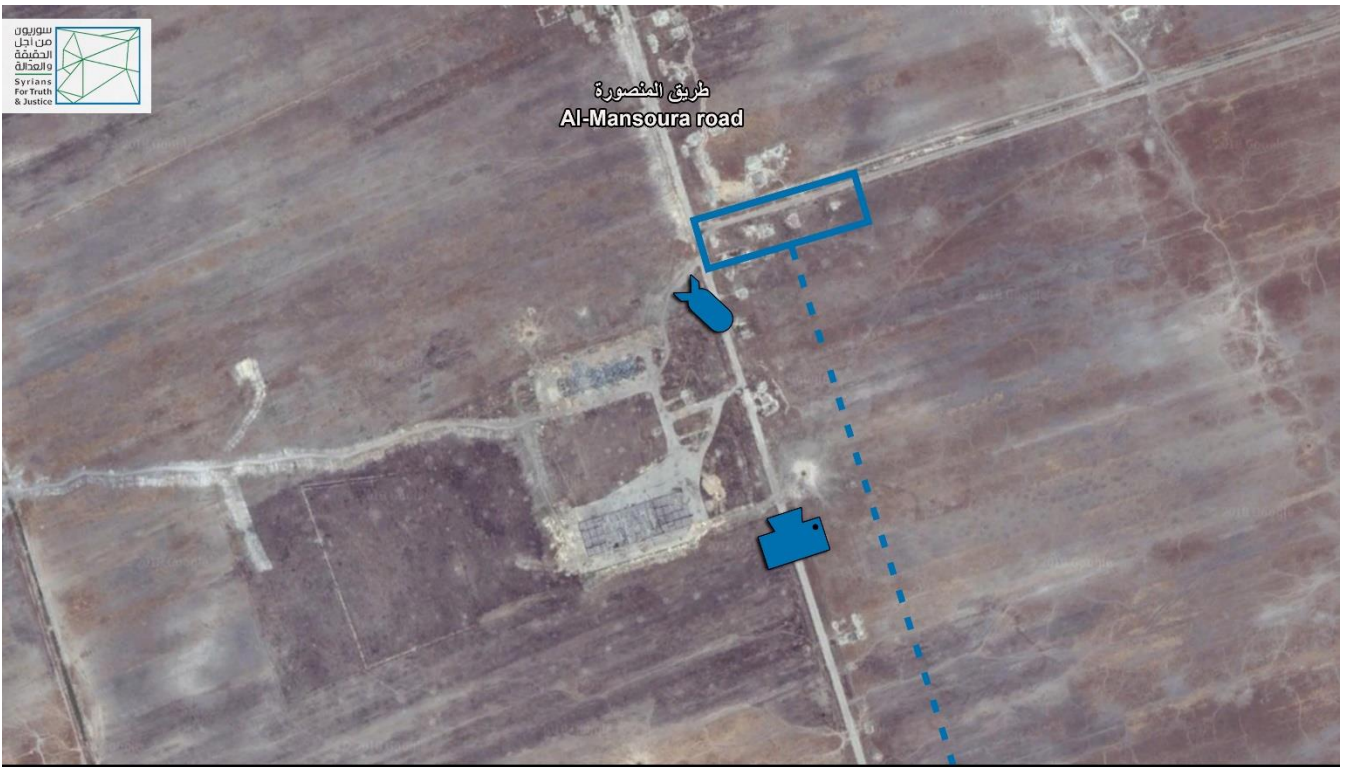
"The other car belonged to a person from Harem city. He was identified as Ibrahim Jouma'a Quweiri, 70; he was with four women identified as Amina Ibrahim Jouma'a Quweiri, Hamida Jouma'a Mangy, 47, Shaimaa Mar'ei al-Mesri, 17, and Alaa Mohammed Ma'touh, 23. we have pulled out the bodies and buried them in a mass grave, which we dug by a bulldozer in cooperation with the townspeople."

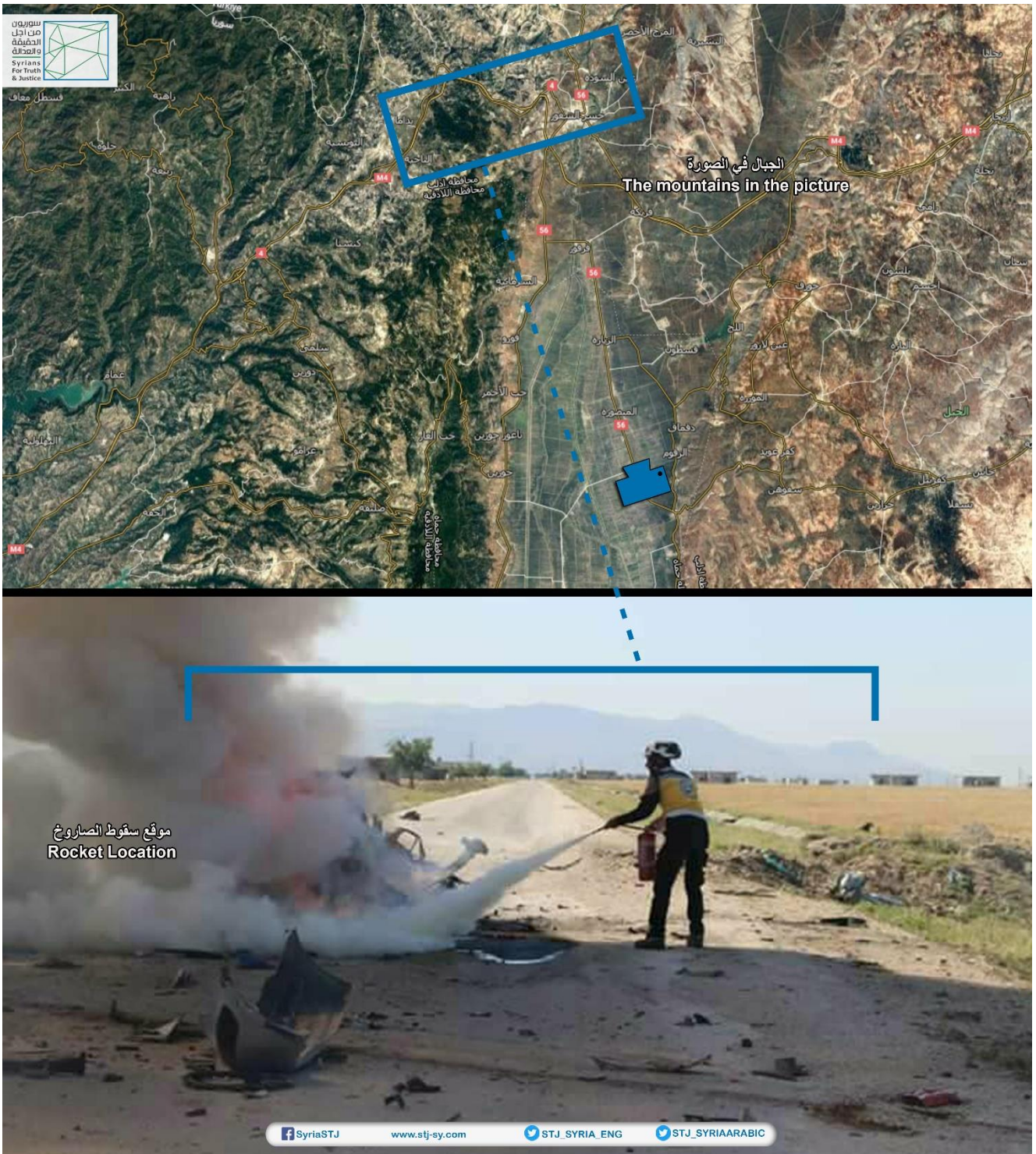




Images showing attempts by the Civil Defense personnel to extinguish the fires resulting from the Syrian regular forces offensive on the road to Mansoura, Hama countryside, on May 16, 2018. Photo credit: [the Civil Defense in the free Hama](#).







Analysis of visual evidence.



Mohammed Khalid ash-Shama'a, brother of one of the victims who died in the attack, confirmed to STJ that his brother identified as Ahmad Khalid ash-Shama'a was a car dealer and always brought vehicles from other areas in the north of Syria. In this regard, he said,

"My brother had no military affiliation, he intended to open a shop for selling the oriental masterpieces, and was planning to do the project in partnership with his friend. Therefore, he drove his vehicle "pick-up" that holds a license plate from Tartous, and he took his seven-year-old kid with him, heading to Sahl al-Ghab. After he arrived the road to Mansoura, the regular forces targeted his car with thermobaric missiles, killing both of them at the spot. We received the news of their death with much sorrow and resentment; he was such a kind brother and a tender father; he was merciful with all the people and had no disputes with anyone. We set up a mourn for him and we said goodbye to his little kid who has not even finished his first grade at school yet."



Image of the victim Ahmad Khalid ash-Shama'a who died in the shelling on al-Mansours on May 16, 2018.

Photo credit: the family of Ahmad Khalid ash-Shama'a.



Fajr Ibrahim Quweiri, the eldest son of the victim Ibrahim Jouma'a Quweiri, told STJ that his father was an aged man and a civil servant in the post office in Harem city, but had retired long time ago and has no links to any military movement or organization. The son added,

"My father travelled to take my sister identified as Amina to the college in Aleppo; three other women accompanied them. Once he got to Sahl al-Ghab, as details of the incident were reported to us, the first car was targeted and a man with his son were inside it. My father saw that the little boy got off the car window due to the explosion and he thought that the child was still alive, therefore, on humanitarian grounds, he stopped the car and went with my sister to rescue the child, but the regime forces targeted my father's car with another missile, killing all of them at the spot. "

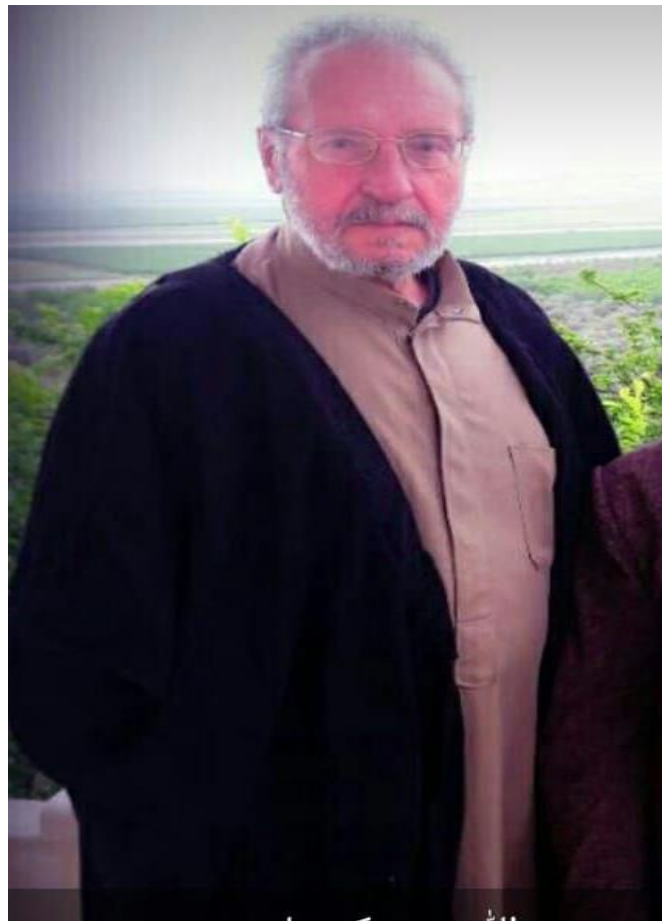


image of the victim Ibrahim Jouma'a Quweiri who died in the offensive on the road to Mansoura in Sahl al-Ghab on May 16, 2018.

Photo credit: Ibrahim Jouma'a Quweiri.