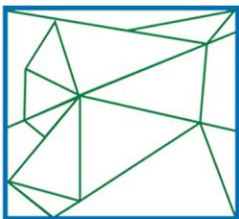


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Syrians
For Truth
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February 2018



Two Massacres in Ma'arat Nu'man and Haas Following Sochi Congress for "National Dialogue"

"Dozens of Casualties in Warplanes Shelling the Residential Neighborhoods in Idlib Southern Countryside"

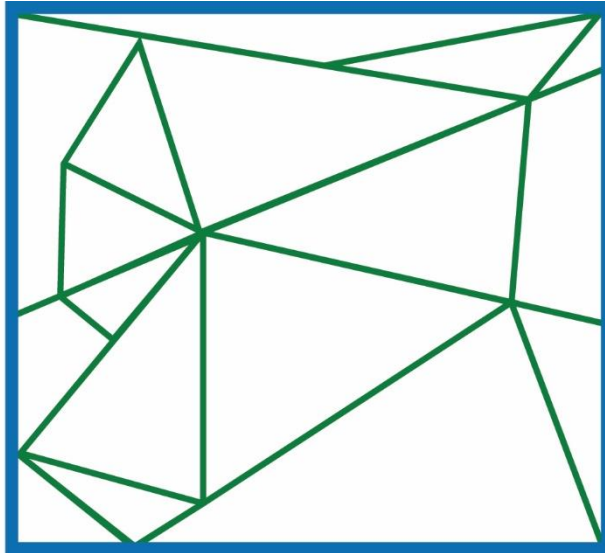
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[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

Syrian regime forces and their allies continued their military escalation in a number of Idlib province towns and cities, as part of the military campaign¹ that started in October 2017. However, residential neighborhoods in those areas were shelled with many types of weapons causing dozens of civilian casualties, as [Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ](#) field researcher confirmed.

STJ had already published [a detailed report on the massacres and the latest events in Idlib](#), the report covered the period between December 25, 2017 and January 20, 2018 during the run up to Sochi congress for the "National Dialogue" held in Russia. In addition to [another report](#) documented two appalling massacres in Idlib countryside, as a result of shelling two popular markets by the Syrian-Russian alliance in late January 2018. However, this report covers the period following convening the "National dialogue" conference in Russia on 29 and 30 January 2018.

On Wednesday, February 7, 2018, Syrian regular forces military aircrafts shelled the town of [Ma'arat Nu'man](#), in the southern countryside of Idlib, along with warplanes believed to be Russian rotated over 14 air strikes in the city, dropping several high-explosive and vacuum rockets on populated areas in the eastern and western neighborhoods of the city, causing 12 civilian deaths and dozens of injuries.

On Friday, February 9, 2018, at least 16 civilians, including women and children, were killed and others injured, after exposure [Hass](#) village, in the southern countryside of Idlib, to Russian-believed warplane shelling. According to the testimonies of several observatories, the warplanes, which carried out the strike, took off from the Shayrat military airbase in Homs countryside, then targeted a residential neighborhood in the village with six high-explosive rockets resulted in many civilian casualties, as well as material damage of their homes.

¹ This escalation comes from the side of Syrian regime forces, following Hayat Tahrir al-Sham /al-Nusra front controlled the village of Abu Dali in the north-east countryside of Hama on October 9, 2017. However, Syrian regular forces backed by the warplanes of Russian air force could restore this village, as well as several villages in the northern countryside of Hama on December 29, 2017. In addition, the regime forces and its allies were able to advance towards Idlib south-east countryside, where they took control of several villages such as Atshanah, al-Khwein and Sinjar, on January 7, 2018, with the aim to arrive at the Abu Duhor military airbase in the south-eastern countryside of Idlib. According to STJ researchers, the military operations led the Syrian regime forces and their allied militias to control Abu Duhur Military Airbase on January 27, 2018.



First: Targeting Residential Neighborhoods in Ma'arat Nu'man

The city of [Ma'arat Nu'man](#) is located in the southern countryside of Idlib and considered the largest part of Idlib, about 84 km away from Aleppo and 60 km from Hama. However, the city follows a civil administration of the local council, which controls all concepts of life (till the date of preparing this report).

On Wednesday, February 7, 2018, warplanes conducted more than **14 air strikes**, caused dozens of casualties in Ma'arat Nu'man, as Syrian/Russian warplanes targeted residential neighborhoods in the city with high-explosive rockets and vacuum missiles, according to what STJ field researcher confirmed.

Mohammed al-Dahir, director of Ma'arat Media Center, spoke to STJ about what happened, saying:

"At 6:40 pm on Wednesday evening, and while I was in my office watching aviation news through the walkie-talkie, the city observatory warned of the warplanes in the air, only after minutes I heard a loud explosion and felt a strong quake, so I went straight to the site, which was in the Eastern district of the city. I was shocked when I saw one of the residential buildings destroyed over its inhabitants, as it was targeted by a vacuum rocket. At once Civil Defense teams arrived and began evacuating wounded, but the warplanes returned again, so we withdrew from the targeted area for fear of being targeted again" .

Mohammed said that a warplane believed to be Russian had re-bombed the city, but this time the western neighborhood, so he hurried to the location of the second raid in order to follow-up on documenting what happened, and in this regard he continued:

"When I got to the second strike location, I saw a "holocaust "in every sense of the word, as more than five Russian and Syrian warplanes, including machine-gun aircraft, rotated over bombing the western quarter of the city. However, Russian warplanes re-bombed the same neighborhood, while a machine-gun targeted civilians and Civil Defense teams, as well as targeting Fuel station in the western neighborhood, resulting in a huge fire that the Civil Defense teams were able to control it only hours later. The number of raids, on the city that night, was more than 14 air raids, not to mention a rocket loaded with cluster munitions launched from the Russian battleships located in the Mediterranean and targeted residential neighborhoods in the city. It was one of the hardest times in the city, about 12 civilians were



killed and scores were injured, the destruction was so big, that it was not described, as results of these airstrikes.



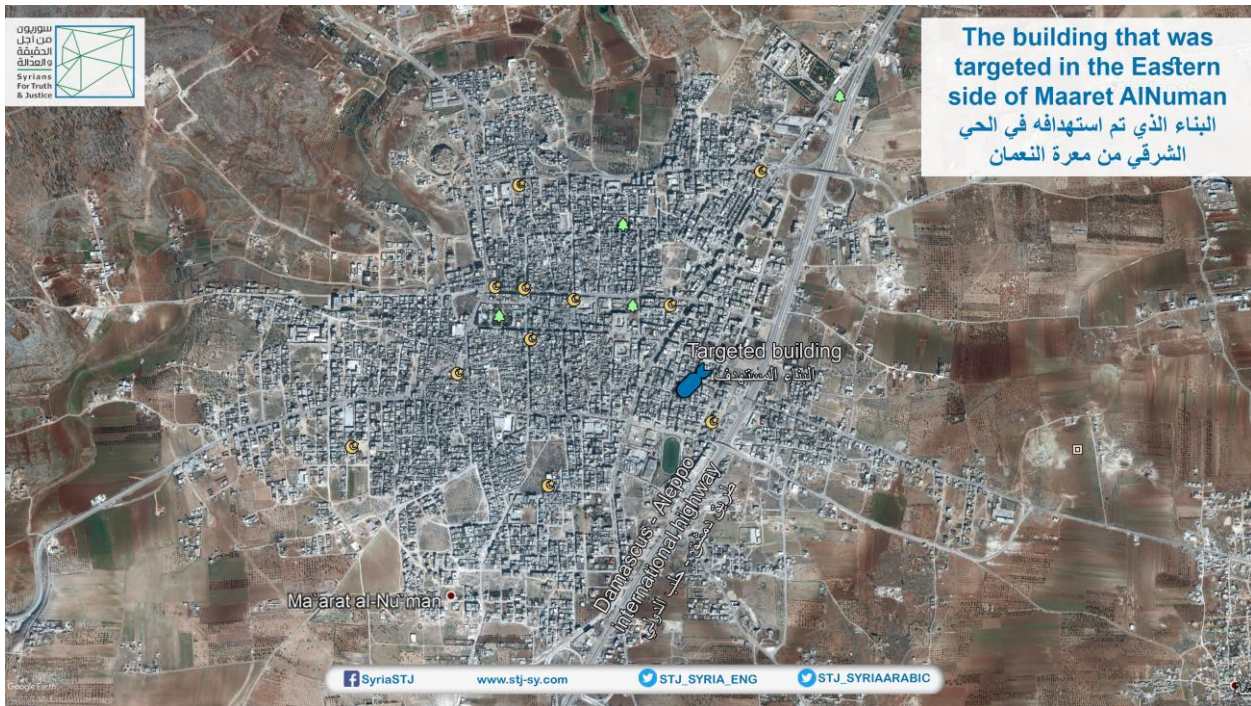
Image shows part of the devastation inflicted on Ma'arat Nu`man, as a result of the warplanes bombardment on the residential neighborhoods on February 7, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



Image shows the location of a rocket fell in a residential building in the eastern neighborhood of Ma'arat Nu`man, on February 7, 2018

Photo credit: STJ.



Satellite image showing the location of the strike



Analysis of visual evidence



Image shows part of the devastation inflicted on the western neighborhood of Ma'arat Nu`man, following the aerial bombardment on February 7, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

Abu Abjar, a supervisor of a military aircraft observatory in Ma'arat Nu`man, confirmed to STJ that (5) warplanes rotated on shelling Ma'arat Nu`man, on the evening of Wednesday, February 7, 2018, including two Sukhoi-type aircraft that had taken off from Hememim Military Base in Latakia province, he continued:

"Among those warplanes, there were also three warplanes-L39 machine gun taken off from [Hama Military Airport](#). The first warplane took off from Hememim Military Base at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, and the other took off at 7:23 p.m. the same day, followed by launching a kleber rocket targeted the city, it was fired from the Russian battleships in the Mediterranean at 7:39 p.m., and then warplanes rotated on bombardment the city, as one Russian aircraft raided a residential building in the eastern district of the city with a vacuum missile, while the second strike targeted the western quarter of the city" .



According to STJ field researcher, the places that have been bombed in the city of Ma'arat Nu`man are completely devoid of any military presence, it is said that the aim of such raids may be displacement the civilians and force them to flee the city. He also documented the names of the victims, who had died in those raids, as following:

- .1. Bahaa Ali al-Hasan from Umm Saharej village.
- .2. Hassan Nahas and his wife.
- .3 Mohammed Ali Al Shawaf.
- .4 Majid Sha`rrawi.
- .5 Hasan Al Shawaf.
- .6 Abdullah Saleh al-Ker.
- .7 Abdel Monei`m Mohammed Ka`eed.
- .8 Rabih Mazher Daedush.

[A video footage](#) circulated by activists showed the big damage caused by the bombardment of the military aircraft on the residential neighborhood of Ma'arat Nu`man on February 7, 2018.



Second: Massacre Claimed 16 civilians Lives in Hass Village in the Southern Countryside of Idlib

Hass village followed Kafranbel district in Ma'arat Nu`man, it is about 8 km in the west of Ma'arat Nu`man, adjacent Kafranbel from the west, and Jabal Al-Zawea from south, the village followed a civil administration of the local council.

On Friday, February 9, 2018, warplanes, believed to be Russian, targeted a residential neighborhood in the center of the village of Hass near a school complex area, resulting in the death of 16 civilians, including women and children, as well as dozens of injuries and significant material damage to civilians` property.

Wasim al-A`raj, from Hass was present near the attacked site, spoke to STJ saying:

"At 1:15 p.m. on Friday, while I was at home, I heard a strong military aircraft, so I hastened to hold the talkie-walkie and follow up what happened, as the observatory was warning the Kafranbel city of the war, I ran to the top of my house to see where were the warplanes and where they would strike. However, the warplanes raided our village, and as I was on the roof, I heard a strong explosion and the pressure was almost get me down. At a great speed, the dust and shrapnel spread in the area, and the raid was three high-explosive rockets targeted a residential neighborhood in the middle of the village located near schools complex, then I heard the voice of the supervisor of observatory saying: "the warplanes rotation on the same axis of the strike, caution", after only a few minutes the warplanes resumed its bombardment firing other high-explosive rockets on the same spot, causing death of 16 civilians, six of them from the same family, not to mention dozens of wounded, and the significant material damage inflicted on the place."



Image shows the devastation of a residential neighborhood in Haas following the aerial bombardment on February 9, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ.



Image shows devastation inflicted on Haas, following the aerial bombardment on February 9, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



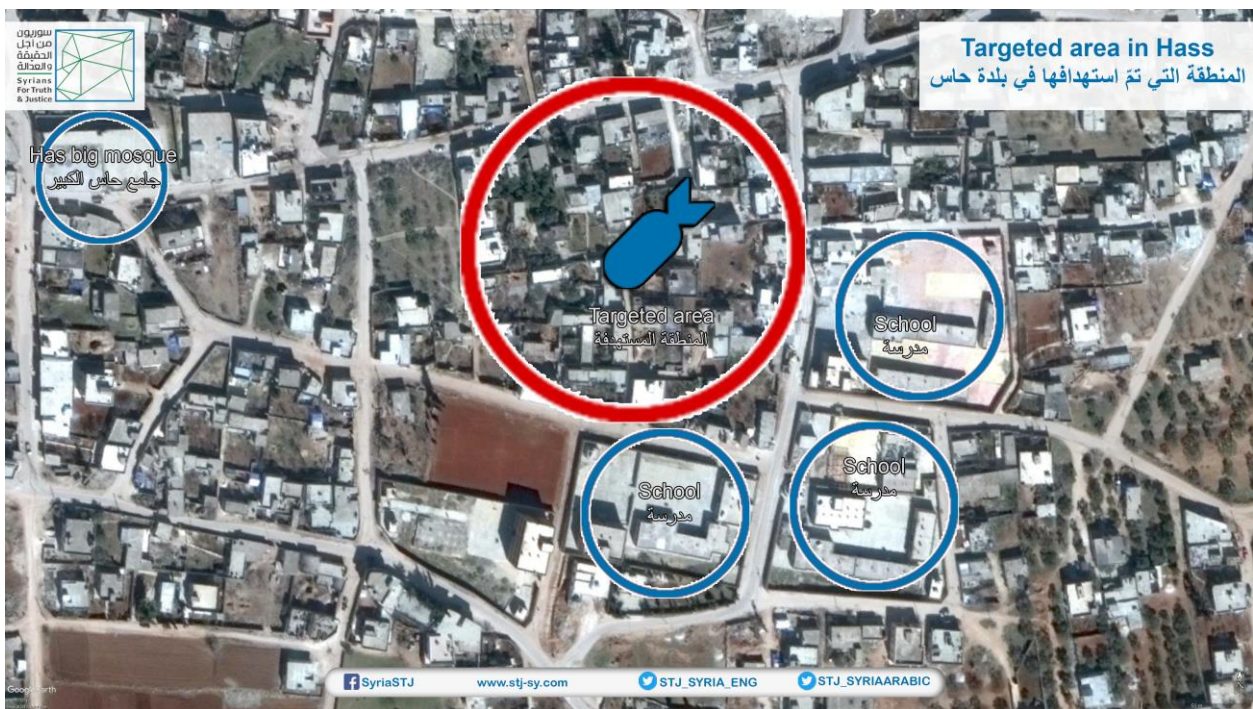
The supervisor of the observatory of the village of Hass, told STJ that a warplane believed to be Russian had taken off from the [Military Shayrat Airbase](#) in Homs countryside, and then targeted the village on Friday, February 9, 2018, he added:

" At 1:05 p.m. on Friday, a Russian warplane took off from the military Shayrat airbase and then headed north on the eastern axis till arrived the village of Sinjar in the eastern countryside of Ma`arat Nu`man, then it took the west axis towards the village of Hass, where the first raid was carried out on the town at 1:19 p.m. , with three high-explosive rockets targeting a residential neighborhood in the center of the village, followed by the second raid with three more rockets, resulting in the death and injury of dozens of civilians" .



Image showing the location of a rocket falling on residential neighborhoods in Hass on February 9, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



Satellite image showing the strike location.



Analysis of visual evidence



According to TJ field researcher, the violent shelling of the town of Ma'arat Nu`man and Haas in February 2018, which caused many civilian casualties, came only several days after Syrian armed opposition factions dropped a Russian warplane in Idlib on February 4, 2018, he also pointed out that the targeted places were populated areas and completely free of any military presence. STJ field researcher documented the names of some of the victims who died in the aerial bombardment of Haas on February 9, 2018, they are:

- 1 .Malik al Mandou and his son.
2. The wife of Amer Mandou and her son.
3. Hanan Aouaj (from Khan Sheikhoun city)
- 4 .Raab`a Hamoud al-Hmoud and her two sons.
- 5 .Ahmed Khaled Al-Dablan (6 years from the town of Latamnah in Hama province)
6. Safa Khaled al-Dablan (17 years old from the town of Latamnah in Hama.
- 7 . Three women from AlGhab Plain/Sahel.
- 8 .Maria al-Kashto .
9. Abdallah Al-Kashto.

[A video footage](#) circulated by activists showed some of the wounded evacuations and significant material damage inflicted on civilian homes, as a result of targeting residential neighborhoods in Haas on February 9, 2018.