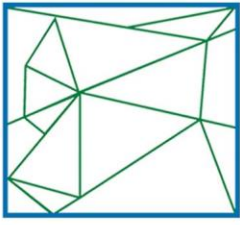
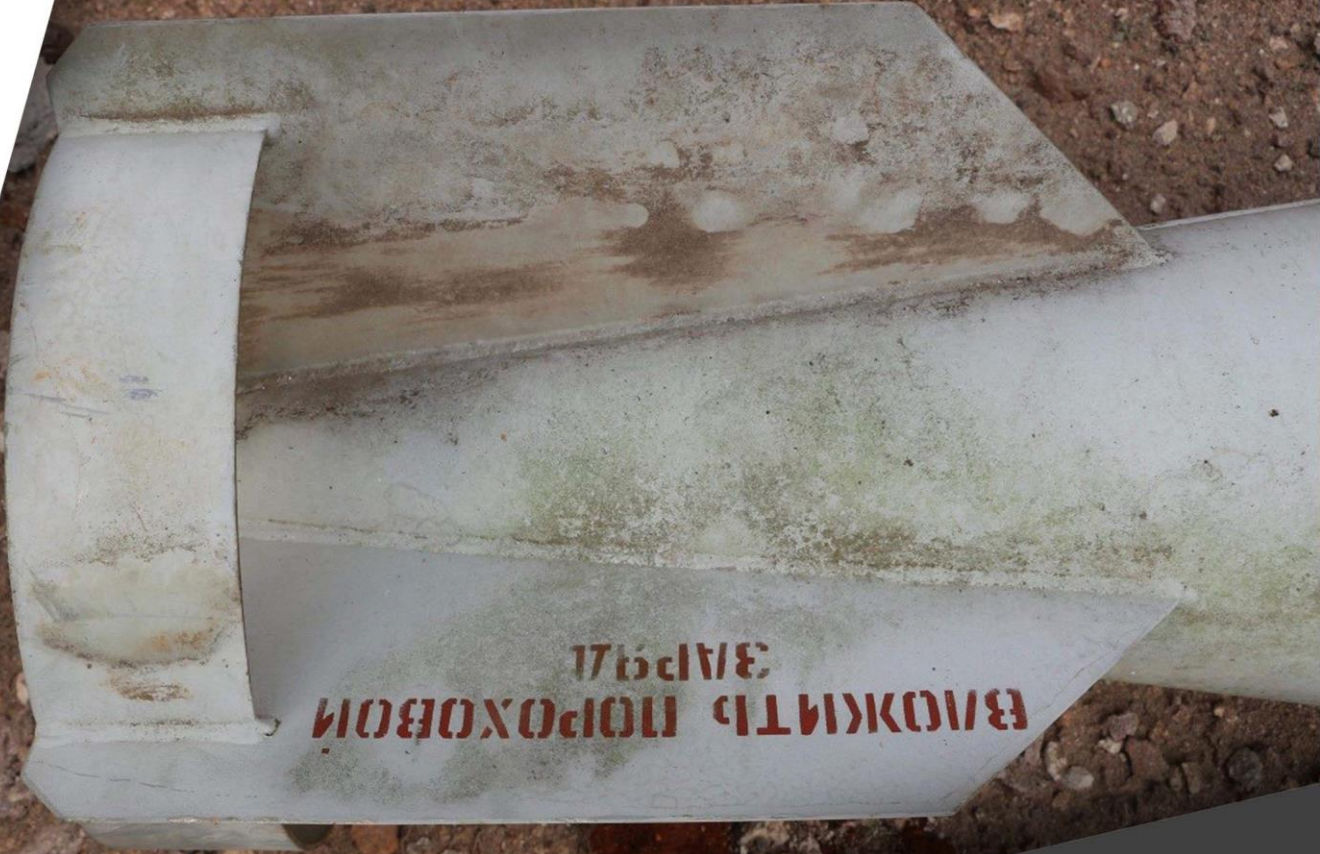


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الحقيقة  
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Syrians  
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February 2018



## Two Appalling Massacres on Two Public Markets in Idlib Countryside by Syrian/Russian Alliance

*“Illegal Attacks Kill Civilians in a Public Market in Arihah and the Potato Market in Saraqib”*

## About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

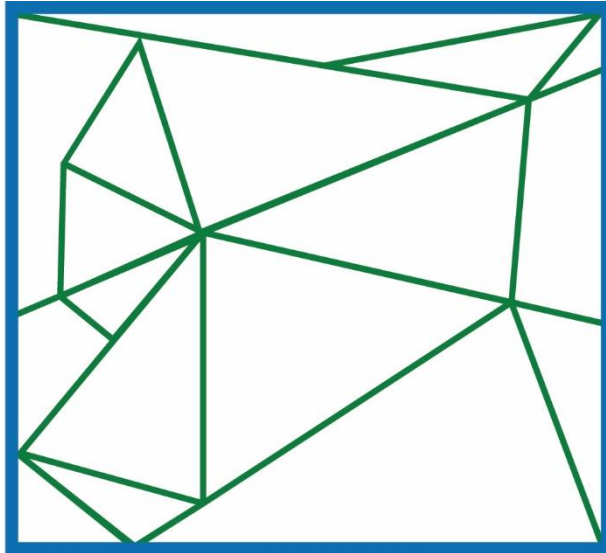
[Syrians for Truth and Justice /STJ](#) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental, independent Syrian organization. STJ includes many defenders and human rights defenders from Syria and from different backgrounds and affiliations, including academics of other nationalities.

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

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## **Two Appalling Massacres on Two Public Markets in Idlib Countryside by Syrian/Russian Alliance**

*“Illegal Attacks Kill Civilians in a Public Market in Arihah and the Potato Market in Saraqib”*



## Preface

Parallel to the continuation of the military campaign<sup>1</sup> launched by the Syrian regular forces and their allies on several towns and cities in Idlib province as of October 2017, which began with attempts by the Syrian forces to control villages and towns in the northern countryside of Hama and then other villages and towns in the east and the south countryside of Idlib, many civilian gatherings in those areas were bombarded with various types of weapons, causing dozens of civilian casualties. On January 30, 2018, a warplane of the Syrian regular forces (according to observatories) bombed a densely populated public market in [Arihah](#)<sup>2</sup> located in the south-west countryside of Idlib, where four (thermobaric) vacuum rockets were dropped on the market all in once, killing 18 civilians, including women and children, and injuring scores.

Just one day, prior to the market incident in Arihah, specifically on January 29, 2018, warplanes believed to be Russian bombed the Potato Market, a public market in [Saraqib](#)<sup>3</sup> located in the southern countryside of Idlib, according to many testimonies obtained by [Syrians for the Truth and Justice/STJ](#). The warplanes dropped several explosive rockets on the Potato Market, killing 14 civilians, mostly from the salespersons and from the displaced who were shopping, as well as causing considerable material damage to the place.

Previously, the Syrian regular forces had already carried out attacks on the public markets in Idlib countryside. STJ had documented in [a previous report](#) the death and injuries of dozens of civilians due to shelling a public market in Ma'arat al-Nu'man in Idlib countryside in October 2017. STJ had also prepared [a report](#) documenting the use of incendiary substances, cluster munitions and (thermobaric) vacuum rockets by the Syrian regime and its allies on cities and towns of Idlib province, from December 25, 2017 to January 20, 2018.

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<sup>1</sup>This escalation comes from the side of the Syrian regular forces after Hayat Tahrir al-Sham-HTS/al-Nusra Front controlled Abu Dali village in the northeast countryside of Hama province on October 9, 2017. However, the Syrian regular forces backed by the Russian Air Force warplanes could restore this village, as well as several villages in the northern countryside of Hama, on December 29, 2017. In addition, the Syrian regular forces and their allies were able to advance towards the southeast countryside of Idlib, and control several villages such as Atshan, al-Khwein and Sinjar, on January 7, 2018, with the aim of arriving at Abu Duhur Military Airbase in the southeast countryside of Idlib. According to STJ researchers, the military operations led the Syrian government forces and allied militias to control Abu Duhur Military Airbase on January 27, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Hayat Tahrir al-Sham-HTS/ formerly al-Nusra Front controls Arihah.

<sup>3</sup> Liwa Jabhat Thwar Saraqib controls Saraqib which has a strategic location as it is a link between the east, west, north, and south countryside of Idlib, and this illustrates the Syrian regime desire to control it, in order to disintegrate Idlib province completely.





## First: Thermobaric Rockets Harvest Civilians Lives in a Public Market in Arihah

In the morning of January 30, 2018, the "Hal Market", one of the public markets in the middle of Arihah was bombed with warplanes affiliated to the Syrian regular forces. Four vacuum rockets targeted the market while it was full of civilians, killing and injuring scores of civilians, including internally displaced persons who had fled because of the intensification of the shelling on their towns in the countryside of Idlib, as well as the material damage caused to the shops and to the locals' property. STJ reporter stated and confirmed that the strike location had no military headquarters.

Osama Jaqmour, a member of the Local Council of Arihah, told STJ that warplanes unloaded their entire cargo all in once on the Hal Market in Arihah while it was full of civilians, and he added:

**"On the morning of 30 January 2018, while I was near the Hal Market, several thermobaric rockets targeted it; it was such a gruesome scene due to the large numbers of the dead and the injured whose blood mixed with vegetables. Up to 15 civilians, including women and children, were killed (documented by names), as well as 20 injuries, including critical situations, all were transferred to the border hospitals. In turn, the city's Local Council, sent a warning call to the people not to gather in the markets, and we suspended the educational process in Arihah completely fearful of new massacres, especially since the warplanes always target civil gatherings, markets and medical points."**

Concerning details of the incident, Walid Aslan, one of the Civil Defense personnel in Idlib, spoke to STJ:

**"Approximately at 11:30 am on 30 January 2018, Syrian warplanes bombarded the public market in Arihah with four highly explosive vacuum rockets, killing 18 civilians, including an entire family of displaced persons, and injuring others. Immediately, the Civil Defense teams hurried to the impact site, where we managed to pull out 20 civilian who were still alive, including children and women, noting that Arihah is considered a safe place for many displaced persons."**



Image shows remnants of one of the thermobaric rockets dropped on the public market in Arihah on January 30, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



An image showing some of the devastation of the public market in Arihah following the aerial bombardment on January 30, 2018.

Photo credit: [Arihah Today](#).



One of the supervisors of the Observatory that monitors the warplanes in Arihah confirmed to STJ that warplanes affiliated to the Syrian regular forces had taken off from [al-Majanzrat School](#) in Hama countryside, targeting the "Hal Market" in Arihah. He added:

**"At 11:00 am on January 30, 2018, a warplane (MiG) of the Syrian Air Force took off from al-Majanzrat School located in Hama countryside, and flied towards Arihah. At once, we informed the Civil Defense teams and the people to be cautious; the aircraft launched a single raid dropping four explosive thermobaric (vacuum) rockets at the "Hal Market" in Arihah, leaving a large number of civilian deaths and injuries."**

[A video footage](#) posted by Hadi Abdallah, the activist, showed the destruction affected to the "Hal Market" in Arihah due to the aerial bombardment on January 30, 2018. Another [video footage](#) transmitted by Orient TV showed the magnitude of the devastation inflicted to the same market due to its shelling on January 30, 2018.

## Second: 14 Deaths in Shelling a Public Market in Saraqib

Syrian regular forces and their allies have intensified their military escalation on Saraqib since January 15, 2018, notably it is approximately 18 km away from the clashes zones between the Syrian regular forces and the armed opposition factions.

According to STJ reporter, a warplane believed to be a Russian Sukhoi, targeted a public market known as the "Potato Market" in Saraqib on January 29, 2018, leaving 14 deaths, mostly salespersons and the displaced who were shopping. Moreover, 15 others have been documented injured as a result of the shelling, and the STJ reporter confirmed that the strike location is free from any military objects.

A Civil Defense officer who rushed to the impact site at the time of the attack, spoke to STJ about what he had happened:

**"At approximately 07:40 am on January 29, 2018, the Potato Market was bombed by Russian warplanes, according to the observatories that informed us. The aircraft dropped several explosive rockets while it was full of vendors and residents; soon, we went to the impact site to transport the wounded and to pull out the victims. Once we arrived, we were shocked due to the large numbers of the dead and the body parts scattered everywhere, besides panic seized the people given the severity of the incident. We have pulled 14 corpses from under the rubble, and the injuries ranged from serious to medium."**





Image shows some of the deaths who died in the bombardment affected to the Potato Market in Saraqib on January 29, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

Abu Arab who is the supervisor of an observatory that monitors the warplane in Saraqib told STJ that a warplane believed to be Russian took off from Hememim Military Airbase in Latakia province, headed towards the Syrian north and specifically to Saraqib, and targeted the Potato Market, he continued:

**"At 7:35 am January 29, 2018, a Russian warplane took off from Hememim Military Airbase, then flew towards Saraqib, and carried out an attack at 7:40 a.m., targeting the "Potato Market", a public market, with several explosive rockets. We informed the Civil Defense and ambulance teams to go to the impact site, and we have alerted the people not to gather, especially since these aircrafts are monitoring and targeting civilian groups."**





Image shows some of the dead due to the aerial bombardment of the Potato Market in Saraqib on January 29, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

According to STJ reporter, at least 14 civilians was documented killed as a result of shelling the Potato Market. They were identified as:

1. Mohammed al-Ali
2. Imad Haj Ahmed
3. Mousa Ismael al-Ahmed
4. Nejdath al-Hamed
5. Mahmoud Zeqzaq
6. Ahmed al-Jileh
7. Jouma'a Basha
8. Ibrahim Jouma'a al-Hamed
9. Fajr al-Ahmed
10. Zaher Zeqzaq
11. An unidentified martyr
12. Mahmoud Younis
13. Abdelazizi Abderrazaq al-Aboud
14. Yaman Mohammed Fajr al-Awad



In another testimony to STJ by Laith Ahmad, an activist from Saraqib, that just one day prior to targeting the Potato Market in the city, specifically on January 28, 2018, 46 raids had been documented launched on Saraqib, along with the bombardment with parachute-laden rockets. On that day, the city was targeted with six barrel bombs and six ground-to-ground missiles loaded with cluster munitions, killing 30 civilians in a single day, as well as injuring others. Laith al-Abdullah noted that the majority of the dead victims were displaced persons who had already migrated to Saraqib from other areas in Idlib countryside.



Image showing the moment when some parachute-laden rockets fell on Saraqib on January 28, 2018.

Photo credit: [The activist Laith Ahmed](#).

**[A video footage](#) posted by Laith Ahmed, an activist, showed time of the fall and explosion of some parachute-laden rockets on Saraqib on January 28, 2018.**

On January 28, 2018, the Local Council of Saraqib issued a statement, and declared Saraqib to be a stricken city given the intensity of the shelling with numerous types of weapons. The statement called on all the international institutions to prompt action to end this fierce military campaign on the public markets, medical facilities, bakeries and other civic gatherings in Saraqib.



## المجلس المحلي لمدينة سراقب The local council Saraqeb

### بيان

نحن في المجلس المحلي لمدينة سراقب .

وبعد الهجمة الشرسة التي تتعرض لها مدينة سراقب و اريافها والتي تقوم بها قوة الاحتلال الروسي عبر كل انواع الطيران الحربي وكافة انواع الذخائر والصواريخ والاسلحة المحرمة دوليا من ( عقودي ، نابالم ،صواريخ مظلية وغيره ... ) كما ان هذه الحملة المدعومة أيضا بطيران وقذائف وصواريخ وراجعات ميليشيات جيش النظام الارهابي وكذلك مدعومة من الميليشيات الارهابية الطفافية من ايران ومن المرتزقة الأفغان والعراقيين والروس وغيرهم ... والتي يستخدم فيها الطيران المحتل الروسي وطيران النظام المجرم بكثافة غير مسبوقة ... حيث تقوم هذه الطائرات بضرب الناس العزل الامنيين في بيوتهم وتدمر البشر والشجر والحجر وكل ما هو حي في هذه المدينة ... وحيث ان المدينة التي تؤوي الالف العائلات من اهلهما والاف العائلات النازحة من ارياف حماه و ادلب وحلب ... هي مدينة خالية من اي مظاهر السلاح وغيره ولا تؤوي الا العزل من المدنيين من اهلهما ومن النازحين في هذا الشتاء القارص ... وحيث ان المدينة تعرضت منذ ساعات الصباح الاولى لم يزيد عن الثماني و اربعون غارة بالأسلحة المحرمة دوليا حيث ارتكبت قوات الاحتلال الروسي و طيران ميليشيا النظام المجازر وقتلت وجرحت العشرات من الاطفال ودمرت البيوت على رؤوس اصحابها وقتلت النازحين تحت خيامهم ... وحيث ان الحملة المسعورة مازال مستمرة حتى الان وهي مستمرة منذ اشهر على هذه المدينة الصابرة ... وقد تسببت بدمار معظم مرافقها الحيوية من مستشفيات ومراكز طبية و افران و اسواق وغيرها ... لكل ذلك وأكثر من هذا الدمار الشامل وحيث ان المدينة قد أصيبت بالدمار الكبير؛ ولم يعد فيها اي مرفق صحي او خدمي ... نحن في المجلس المحلي في مدينة سراقب نعلن سراقب مدينة منكوبة ... وندعو كل المؤسسات الدولية من مجلس امن و اسم متحدة و منظمات حقوق الانسان وكل حكومات العالم (( الحر ان وجد)) بالعمل على وقف هذه المجرزة الوحشية والبربرية والبدائية المستمرة على الاهلي العزل في المدينة ... والعمل على تقديم مرتكبيها الى العدالة الدولية ...

سراقب ٢٠١٨\١\٢٨

الرحمة لشهدائنا والشفاء لجرحنا والنصر لثورتنا

#### Announcement

The Russian occupation is mounting a vicious attack on the city of Saraqib and its suburbs, using all forms of warplanes, munitions, missiles, and internationally-banned weapons (including cluster munitions, napalm, parachute-borne missiles, and others). The current Russian campaign is backed by the warplanes, mortars, and missiles of the regime's terrorist army, by terrorist, sectarian Iranian militias, by Afghan, Iraqi, and Russian mercenaries, as well as others. The warplanes of the Russian occupier, and the criminal regime are bombing the city at an unprecedented rate. They are hitting defenseless civilians who are trying to shelter at home. They are destroying people, trees, stones, and everything alive in this city. Saraqib city is home to thousands of local families, as well as families who were displaced from the Hama, Idlib, and Aleppo countryside. Saraqib is free of armed forces--the city is home only to civilians and to IDPs taking shelter during this harsh winter. Saraqib has been struck since early morning by 48 airstrikes and counting, which used internationally-banned weapons. The Russian occupying forces and the regime's air force have carried out massacres, killing and wounding dozens of children, collapsing houses on the heads of their owners, and killing IDPs as they sheltered in their tents. This insane military campaign continues until now, as it has for months, against this resilient city. It has destroyed most of our essential infrastructure, including hospitals, clinics, bakeries, markets, and other facilities. As a result of all that destruction, the city no longer has a functioning medical center, or other services. Based on the above, we, members of the local council for Saraqib, announce that Saraqib is experiencing a disaster. We call on all international organizations, including the United Nations and the security council, humanitarian rights organizations, and all the world's governments, to work to stop this brutal, barbaric, primitive massacre that has continued against innocent civilians and their city, and to bring the perpetrators of this massacre to international justice. We pray for mercy for our dead, swift recovery for our injured, and victory for our revolution.

Saraqeb 28/1/2018

An image showing the statement issued by the Local Council of Saraqib on January 28, 2018, in which it declared Saraqib to be a stricken city.

Photo credit: [The Local Council of Saraqib](#).

The recent violent attacks on several cities and towns of Idlib have caused a large exodus by the people towards safer areas such as towns and cities of (Sarmada and Atmah) and the camps located on the Syrian-Turkish border, STJ reporter said.