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## **Violent Attacks on Ariha and Bombardment on Kansafr, Idlib Countryside 2018**

A Special Report Highlights Several Attacks on al-Ameen Medical Complex and a Public Market in Ariha, as well as Bombardment of Civilians' Houses in Kansafr Town, Jabal al-Zawiya

## About Syrians for Truth and Justice

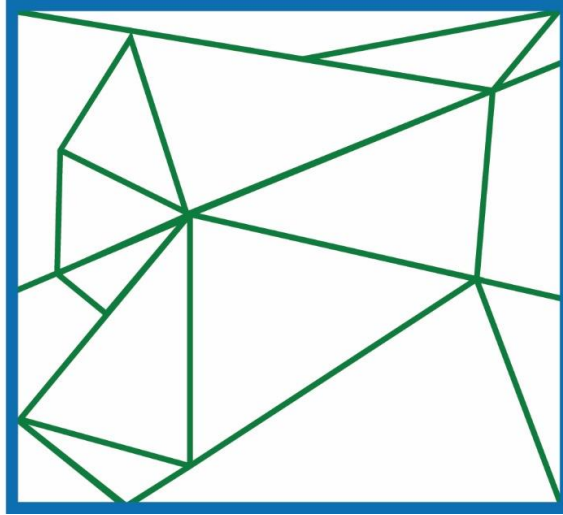
[Syrians for Truth and Justice \(STJ\)](#) is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and nationalities. It also includes members of other nationalities.

The initiative strives for SYRIA, where all Syrian citizens (males and females) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  

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Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice





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## Introduction

Since the beginning of April 2018, several villages and towns in Idlib countryside have witnessed violent attacks carried out by the Syrian regular forces and their allies. On April 1, 2018, al-Ameen Medical Complex located in [Ariha](#)<sup>1</sup> city was bombarded by warplane believed to be Russian, throwing two highly explosive rockets on the complex, causing it to be completely out of service.

Furthermore, on April 3, 2018, the "vegetable market" in Ariha was exposed to aerial bombardment, when a warplane, believed to be Russian, launched two airstrikes loaded with high-explosive rockets in the morning, killing two civilians and injuring others.

[Kansafr](#)<sup>2</sup> town, located in Jabal al-Zawiya, did not spare from bombardment by Syrian regular forces and their allies. On April 4, 2018, civilian houses in the town were shelled by Syrian warplanes, destroying these houses seriously as well as injuring two civilians.

According to the field researcher of Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), Ariha has been witnessing a violent military escalation since the beginning of April 2018, indicating that it is not the first time when the "vegetable market" is being attacked. On January 31, 2018, the market was subjected to aerial bombardment killing (8) and wounding scores others. the STJ's field researcher said that the recent military escalation in Ariha led a large number of people to displace to safer places, fearful of other attacks.

This attack is in the context of the military campaign launched by the Syrian regular forces and their allies throughout cities and towns of Idlib province since October 2017, which began with attempts to control villages and towns in the northern countryside of Hama, and then other villages and towns in the eastern and southern countryside of Idlib, leaving massacres against civilians. STJ has prepared [a report](#) previously documenting a horrific massacre when 20 civilians lost their lives in Kafr Battikh town following bombarding a shelter by warplanes on March 21, 2018. STJ has also prepared a report entitled "[Military Escalation during March- Idlib Province](#)", which documented attacks on educational facilities in Idlib city and a massacre in Kafr Sijnah, Idlib countryside.

<sup>1</sup> Hayat Tahrir al-Sham(HTS)- formerly al-Nusra Front- controls Ariha.

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

## First: Civilian Casualties After Violent Attacks on Ariha

On April 1, 2018, a warplane, believed to be Russian, launched an airstrike on al-Ameen Medical Complex located in Ariha, and dropped two highly explosive rockets causing massive destruction in the complex, so it went out of service. The complex used to provide health care services to approximately (15) thousand residents in the city and its adjacent villages. In this regard, Mirna Hasan, an activist from Ariha, said,

**"At 11:00 pm, Russian warplanes targeted al-Ameen Medical Complex in Ariha city, in addition to the relief depots affiliated to al-Ameen for Humanitarian Support, along with the garage of the ambulance system of the complex. The attack caused considerable material damage in the complex, and injured two of the medical personnel. It should be noted that the complex used to provide health care services to the residents, and it included a kidney dialysis center as well as a physiotherapy center; it covered Ariha city and some neighboring villages; in addition, it was a point to receive the displaced civilians from eastern Ghouta."**



An image shows a side of the devastation affected to al-Ameen Medical Complex located in Ariha, following the aerial bombardment on April 1, 2018. Photo credit: [al-Ameen for Humanitarian Support](#).



Another image shows part of the devastation affected to the relief depot of al-Ameen for Humanitarian Support located in Ariha after the aerial bombardment on April 1, 2018.

Photo credit: [al-Ameen for Humanitarian Support](#).

Mirna said that the warplanes re-bombed Ariha city on April 3, 2018, but this time attacked a public market, known as the "vegetable market", which was full of civilians. Warplane believed to be Russian, launched two airstrikes on the market, dropping highly explosive rockets, and killing two civilians identified as Haytham Jaqmour and Ismail Nahhas, as well as injuring dozens others and causing extensive damage to the market.



In another testimony obtained from Aref Watad, a local from Ariha, he assured to STJ that on April 3, 2018, warplanes violently attacked the vegetable market located in Ariha. Concerning this incident, he said:

**"At 9:00 am April 3, 2018, while I was getting ready to go to work, I heard roar of a warplane hovering in the city skies. Then, I heard the voice of an overseer on the observatories through the walkie-talkie warning of a warplane. Immediately, I carried my children and rushed downstairs. After that, I heard the sound of a rocket followed by the sound of a loud explosion that shook the city. When I went out to check on my neighbors, one of them said the attack was on the vegetable market, so I hurried there to help those in need. As soon as I got there, I was shocked by the horror of devastation; I also saw several wounded lying on the ground. The ambulances and civil defense teams came and participated in transporting the wounded to nearby hospitals. Consequently, the city has recently witnessed a massive exodus towards the border areas, fearful of continuing the savage bombardment by the regime forces."**

[A video footage](#) published by Idlib Media Center showed the first moments of the warplanes bombardment on the public market in Ariha on April 3, 2018.



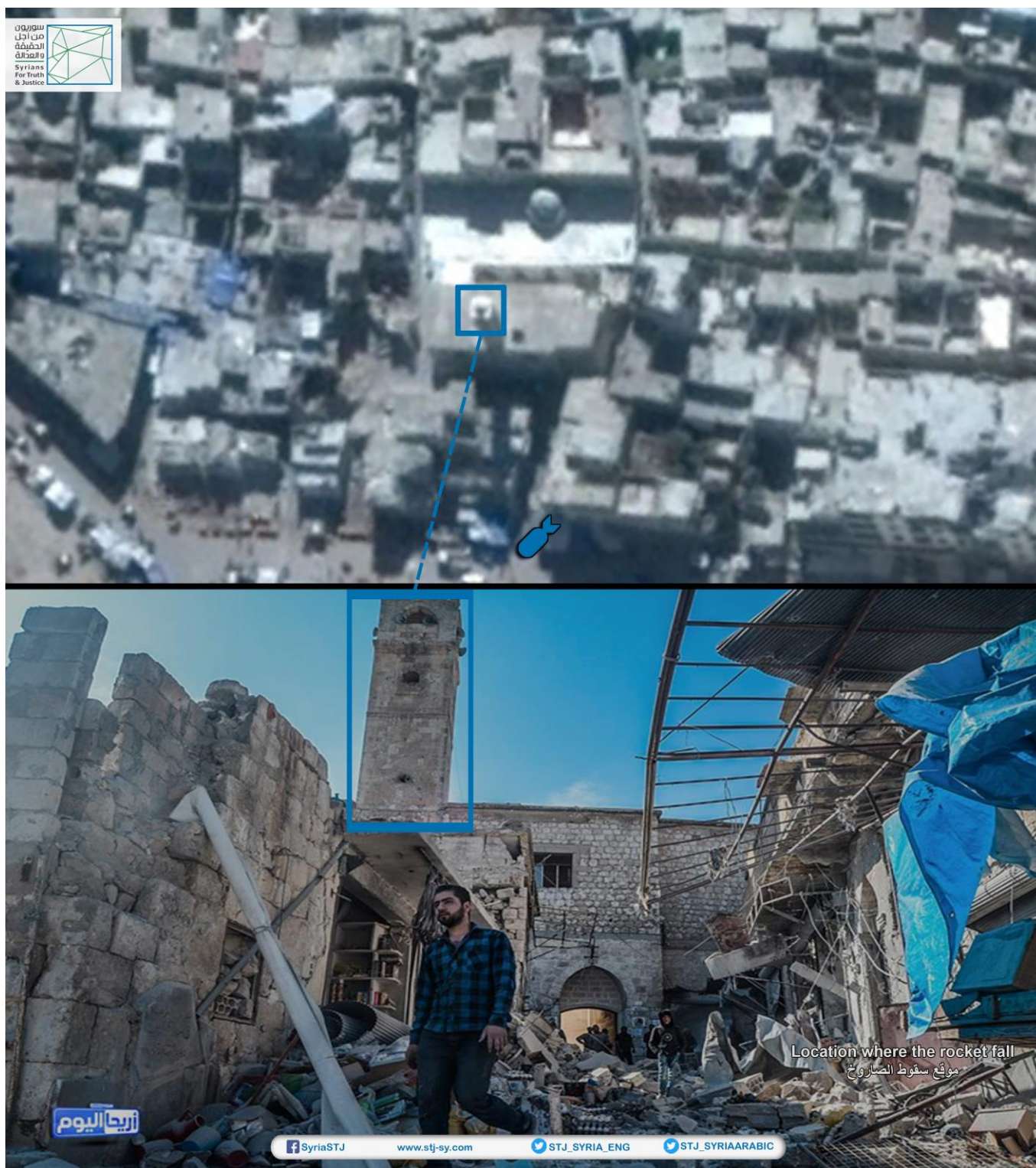




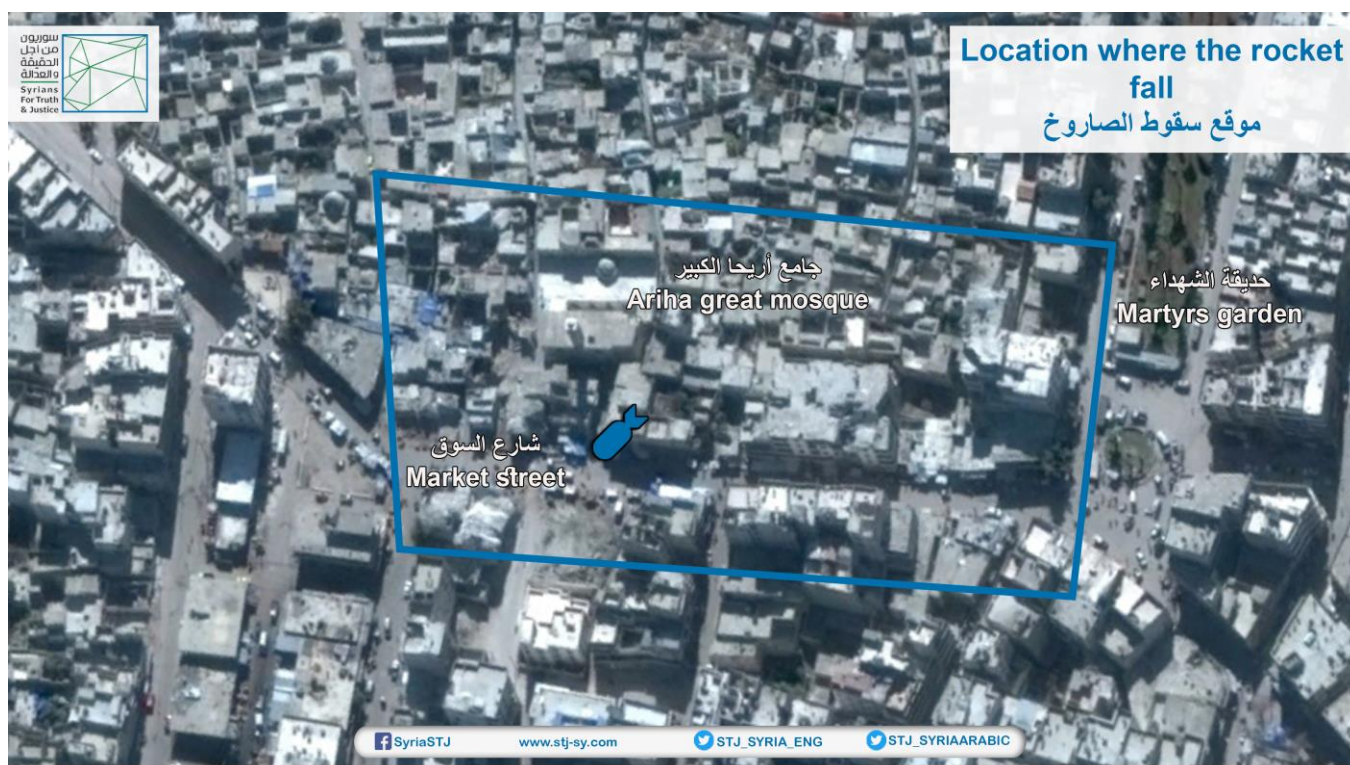
Image shows some of the devastation affected to the vegetable market in Ariha following the aerial bombardment on April 3, 2018. Photo credit: [Ariha Today](#)











Visual evidence analysis

The residential areas in Ariha did not spare from attacks by warplanes; on April 4, 2018, there was an attack that caused major devastation of civilians' houses as well as several civilian injuries, Watad added.

## Second: Bombarding Civilian Houses in Kansafr Town, Jabal al-Zawiya

Attacks of Syrian regular forces and their allies were not only limited to Ariha, but also affected Kansafr town, located in Jabal al-Zawiya. Syrian warplanes bombarded Kansafr on Wednesday, 4 April 2018, wounding two civilians and causing major destruction in residential buildings. In this regard, Khalid Hassoun, one of the townspeople, said to STJ,

"Around 11:00 a.m., one of the observatories warned through the walkie-talkie of a warplane in the skies of Jabal al-Zawiya, and called to scatter the gatherings and to seek for a shelter. Only moments later, I heard the sound of the warplane carrying out its attack, after that, I felt an earthquake due to the intensity of the explosion. I rushed immediately to the strike





**location, and found out that it had targeted houses of the civilians in the town. A woman and an old man were injured, and considerable material damage had affected the place."**

Hasan Afluk, another witness from Kansafr town, told STJ, that the warplanes had launched several airstrikes on the civilian houses using high-explosive rockets, which seriously destroyed the houses.

**"Around 10:45 a.m. while I was shopping in the town market, I saw people looking at the sky; there was a warplane hovering in the air, I tried to be quick as much as possible to reach my home before any raid, but it was only a few moments until the flight bombed the village, followed by the sound of a huge explosion that shook the entire village. When I went to the impact site, I found out that the attack had targeted civilians' houses; dust was filling the place because the shelling had caused destruction of several civilians' houses and vehicles, and injured an elderly man and a woman", Hasan Afluk said.**

The field researcher for STJ said that on April 4, 2018, that Syrian regular forces and their allies bombed several villages in Idlib countryside, including the towns of Hazarin, Al-Bara, the vicinity of Jisr al-Shughour, al-Gasaniyah, Eshtabraq, Halouz, and Kastan), these attacks caused a number of civilian casualties.