

Press release: “Six Months On: Medical Facilities in Syria Still Under Fire.”

Joint Report from Syrian Archive, Syrians for Truth and Justice, Bellingcat

19 Feb. 2018

In July 2017, the [Syrian Archive](#), in partnership with [Syrians for Truth and Justice](#), [Justice for Life](#), [Bellingcat](#) and a flight observation organization, published a report titled [Medical Facilities Under Fire: Systemic Attacks during April 2017 on Idlib Hospitals](#). Findings suggested that in April 2017 Syrian and Russian armed forces were responsible for the eight attacks on Syrian hospitals and healthcare centres - facilities in Idlib serving a combined 1.3 million people (a beneficiary group larger than the population of Brussels).

Now, six months later, little has changed. Syrian Archive Director Hadi al Khatib stated: “Despite enjoying a protected status under International Humanitarian law, hospitals remain at the frontlines of the Syrian conflict and are targeted regularly. Within a four week period, four additional Idlib hospitals, well within the De-Escalation Zones established in the Astana talks by Russia, Turkey and Iran, were attacked by airstrikes that visual, witness statements, and flight observation data attribute to Syrian or Russian forces. Three of these hospitals were attacked within a week.”

The authors of [this joint report](#) analyzed and verified this pattern of attacks by cross referencing a combination of open-source visual content (50 verified videos), witness statements (10 persons interviewed), and flight observation data (1698 observations). Findings regarding these attacks were characterized by repeated bombardments, lack of warnings, and an absence of active military hostilities in the vicinity of the attack. By examining a variety of sources of information for each attack, the authors were able to corroborate and strengthen the findings from their visual content dataset.

Further, medical facilities identified in this report have been targeted deliberately. Footage from [the attack on Orient Hospital of Kafranbel](#) on 5. Feb. 2018 clearly shows the hospital was attacked directly, with one video capturing a bomb as it fell through the air and struck the east side of the hospital building.

Despite the Russian Embassy to the United Kingdom [issuing a press release on 15 Feb. 2018](#) denying involvement in attacks on Idlib medical facilities identified, findings in this report suggest otherwise. Flight observation data shows that for the 4 Feb. 2018 bombing of Maarat al-Numaan National Hospital several aircraft have taken off from Hmeimim airbase (controlled by Russian forces), flown north, turned around and bombed the National Hospital at 8:40 PM Damascus time.

As Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has previously stated that the [Syrian air force does not have night time flying capabilities](#), findings from this joint report indicate that either: 1) the Syrian air force has vastly improved its capabilities, potentially involving government forces not only in the attack on the four medical facilities identified in this report, but also in previous night attacks, such as on humanitarian aid convoys; 2) Russian airforces were involved in the attack of Idlib medical facilities; or 3) An unknown third-party airforce operating Russian aircraft from Russian airbases was involved in the attack of Idlib medical facilities, indicating Russian forces are failing to enforce compliance within their own airbases.

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