

February 2019

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



Blasts Shake Six Cities in Rural 11 Aleppo: Over 127 Persons Killed or Injured

11 Blasts Shake Six Cities in Rural Aleppo: Over 127 Persons Killed or Injured

In December 2018 and January 2019, the cities of al-Bab, Azaz, Afrin, al-Ghandourah, al-Rai and Qabasin bore witness to 11 explosions, the perpetrators of which are yet unidentified

In Aleppo province, in December 2018 and January 2019, six cities suffered 11 explosions, several of which were simultaneous. The perpetrators of the blasts, which caused the death or injury of no less than 127 persons, including women and children, are yet unknown. The Turkey-backed Military Police of the National Army¹, for its part, arrested over five persons, suspecting they had a role in the explosions, as the testimonies obtained by Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ indicate.

STJ's field researchers in the northern and north-western rural parts of Aleppo documented the blasts that hit the areas and conducted interviews with several eyewitnesses, local officials and medical staffers, reporting that the explosions that shook the cities of Azaz, al-Rai, al-Bab, al-Ghandourah and Qabasin on December 12, 2018, and January 24, 2018, were all simultaneous. Only two of the blasts suffered by the city of Afrin, however, were simultaneous, while all 11 blasts were implemented by remote control.

I. Explosions that Hit the Six Cities:

1. Three Blasts in Afrin City:

On January 20, 2019, two separate explosions took place, one of which killed three persons and injured 10 others. Interviewed by STJ's field researcher, an eyewitness, refusing to reveal his name for personal reasons, said:

“Around 9:30 a.m., we received an order necessitating that all the Civil Police departments in Afrin be alert because a car bomb was reported as being in the al-Nowruz/Salah ad-Din Roundabout. The bomb was handled and remotely detonated without any casualties. Still indulged in the work, about an hour after the first explosion, we heard the sound of a second blast, which we located as in Kawa/Olive Branch Roundabout. We headed there immediately; it was the onset of the explosion. We were taken aback, for it was a bus; a public transportation means has detonated, leaving the civilians' mutilated parts and shrapnel all over the place. Civil entities started to arrive in the location, hospitalize the injured and recover the bodies of the victims. The number of people affected was massive, amounting to 13, of whom three died while others' wounds were critical.”

According to STJ's field researcher, the identity of the perpetrators of the two blasts is yet unknown and the investigations are still being run, for to the time this report was written no side adopted the incidents. The researcher has also documented two names of the people who died in the explosion: Mohammad Mousa and Hisham al-Shaikh – both were medical staffers under the al-Sham Legion. The third victim's identity, nonetheless, is unidentified.

¹ On December 30, 2017, the General Staff, under the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Interim Government, announced the formation of the National Army, consisting of three divisions: The Legion of the National Army, the Legion of the Levant Front and the Sultan Murad Legion, which operate in northern and north-eastern rural Aleppo, in addition to Afrin lately.

The injured are Sa'ad A'arouri, Mahmoud al-Halabi, Mustafa al-Ali, Houriah Mahmoud, Rifa'at al-Shaikh Swaidi, Ibrahim Juha and Juma'a Mahmou.

On the rush hour of December 13, 2018, a booby-trapped motorcycle blew up on the Rajo Street, near a mechanic bakery belonging to a person known as Abou Immad, killing and injuring about 13 persons. A car bomb detonated on the same day at the entrance to the city's al-Hal Market/popular market, also killing four civilians and injuring 18 others, as reported by the Syrian Civil Defense/White Helmets on its official account. Local activists, for their part, said that eight persons were killed, one of whom is a woman, 15 others were injured, and some of them were transferred to Turkish hospitals.

Reporting the blast on December 17, 2018, which happened in the Popular Market, France Press published a [video report](#), featuring a militant of an armed group, who was there during the explosion, as saying that all the injured were civilians, and it was not a military target that the blast aimed at.

Commenting on the explosions, the Afrin-based local activist, by the name of Basel, said:

“The security status of the city is quite complicated. No side can be easily accused of carrying the explosions out, and the investigations have not yet been finalized. Additionally, there is not enough evidence to prove any side responsible. The explosions were done through remote control, by making a call to a cellphone fixed to the explosive devices and bombs. Some [people] are accusing the Kurdish Units of the incidents; they, on their turn, are adopting several explosions. But not in this case, for they do not have the required capacity to undertake all these attacks that are mostly targeting civilians.”

Reporting the number of casualties, a White Helmets' volunteer told STJ's field researcher the following:

“We do not have clear or trustworthy statistics on the number of casualties who died in the explosions. No entity is conducting such a documentation process. For our part, we are documenting the names of persons and the casualties whose bodies we recover or those who we hospitalize only. To explain myself, at the site of the explosion there might be 20 injured persons, who get hospitalized by various rescue teams, due to this we do not register all the victims' names.”

The Turkey-backed armed groups, which participated in the Operation Olive Branch, took over Afrin city in March 2017, in the after math of a large-scale military operation against the People's Protection Units/YPG.

2. Two Blasts in Azaz City:

STJ's field researcher monitored the explosion of a car bomb on a highway, south to the city on January 28, 2019, which caused the injury of nine persons. The researcher also recorded another car bomb explosion on December 12, 2018, at the city center, close to the al-Maytam/Orphanage Mosque and government establishments, affiliated with the opposition/the Interim Syrian Government, which resulted in the death of a little girl and a man, as well as the injury of 19 others, according to [a video](#), published on the Azaz Media Center's official Facebook account, that shows the Ibn Zaydun School and the condition of the children in the vicinity of the blast's location.

The Azaz-based media activist Hassan Hamdou commented on the second explosion, telling STJ's field researcher the following:

"At 1:30 p.m., the sound of a massive blast reached us; it shook the city. Then, the ambulances started to move towards the blast's location, which took place behind the al-Maytam Mosque, city center. This site is considered one of the most crowded places with civilians, being an assembly point for numerous foundations. The blast destroyed a part of the al-Ahli Hospital, and other damages have reportedly befallen the building of the Psychiatric Hospital. The blast was also close to the building of the Interim Syrian Government, which caused the injury of Mr. Abdulmunem Mustafa, a member of the Aleppo Provincial Council, in addition to the death of Nour, a 10-year-old girl, while helping her blind father, who works as a vendor, not to mention the 20 wounded persons, who have injuries of varied severity."

STJ's field researcher documented the names of the casualties affected by the blast on December 12, 2018. They are: Ali al-A'abou, Abdullah Elkeh, Bashar Mohammad Emairo, Ammar Daykhi, Salim Jebawi, who died affected by his wounds, little girl Nour Jebawi, who died on the spot, Sha'aban Shaikho, Mohammad Khair Naff, Hassan Maki, Abdulaziz Sulaiman, Khlaif Taleb al-Mohammad, Sima al-Hassan, Abdullah al-Mohammad, Talib al-Jasem, Mohammad al-Ahmad, Hamza Barjass, Abdulmalik Hamdou, Fedaa al-Mustafa, Iyad Khudder, Zainap Yousef Hassan and Mohammad Ali Bakri.

3. Blast in al-Rai City:

STJ's field researcher reported that the explosion in the al-Rai city, which took place near money transfer and exchange offices on December 12, 2018, happened less than two hours after the two blasts that targeted the two cities of Azaz and al-Bab, leading to the injury of six persons.

Baker al-Salem, a media activist who witnessed the explosion, informed STJ's field researcher of the following:

“At 2:30 p.m., on Wednesday, December 12, 2018, I heard the sound of a blast in the al-Rai city; it belonged to a motorcycle bomb that blew up at the city's center, specifically close to the Turkish center of money remittances. It caused the immediate injury of six civilians, whose wounds ranged from mild to moderate.”

On January 24, 2019, the National Army-affiliated Military Police managed to dismantle a booby-trapped motorcycle, prepared to be detonated. Hassan al-Ahmad, a policeman of the Military Police, commented on the incident, saying:

“While a police patrol was combing the al-Rai city for explosive devices, a canine tracked its way to a motorcycle parked in the Popular Market at the city's center. It was around 1:30 p.m. The motorcycle was equipped to be detonated by remote control. The engineering units, however, managed to dismantle it later on.”



A photo of the motorcycle dismantled in al-Rai city's center, obtained by STJ from the eyewitness Ahmad al-Hassan, a policeman of the Military Police.

4. Two Blasts in Qabasin City:

On January 24, 2019, the city of Qabasin bore witness to two consecutive blasts, one of them killed seven persons, including two children. Commenting on the incident, Mansour Abou al-

Khair, media spokesperson of the Syrian Civil Defense, told STJ's field researcher the following:

“Around 1:30 p.m., a blast took place in the Qabasin city’s center; it was an improvised explosive device implanted near a trash container. The blast resulted in material damage only. However, a few minutes later and less than 10 meters away from the first, a second explosion took place. It was a motorcycle bomb, this time. It injured seven persons, including two children. The process of detonation was organized; the first explosion took place; the detonator waited for ten minutes, giving people the chance to congregate in the surrounding of the first blast, only to embark on the second, intending to harm the biggest possible number of civilians.”

STJ's field researcher recorded the names of the persons injured in the blast. They are Ibrahim Mahmoud al-Asmar, Issam Barakat, Bashar al-Haj, Jameel Osman, Bayan Khelalo and Abdulaziz al-Ali.

5. Blast in al-Ghandourah Town:

A motorcycle bomb blew up in the market of al-Ghandourah town on the rush hour, causing the injury of seven persons, a little girl included while the identity of the perpetrator is yet unknown. STJ's field researcher spoke to the local activist Hassan al-Tallawi, who said:

“On January 24, 2019, around 1:30 p.m., a motorcycle exploded at the town’s market, injuring Muhanad al-Jasim, 19 years old, Basheer Mahmoud Hamadeh, 51-year-old, Ghufran Hamadeh, 4-year-old, Ammar al-Sgheer, 17-year-old, and Abdurahaman Dandan, 20-year-old.”



A photo posted by the Syrian Civil Defense on its official Facebook account, showing the effects of the explosion of a motorcycle in the al-Ghadourah town on January 24, 2019.

6. Blasts in al-Bab City:

STJ's field researcher investigated into the explosion that happened in the city of al-Bab on January 24, 2019, which, in its turn, synchronized with the above-mentioned blasts, taking place around 3:00 p.m. The forces of the Military Police, the researcher reported, announced a state of alarm in the city before the explosion, in search of potential explosive devices, following the reported blasts in neighboring areas. The al-Bab City Coordination Office posted [a video](#) featuring the onset of the blast and the destruction it effected.

Hassan al-Mesouti, a civilian who witnessed the explosion, told STJ's field researcher the following:

"While passing near the Center Roundabout's area, al-Baby city's center, around 3:00 p.m., a huge explosion took place, close to a pastry shop. I saw the people's bodies turning into pieces, including a little girl, who stood by the shop. Despite my slight injury and the damage that befell my car, I hospitalized a number of the wounded, hoping to save their lives."

For his part, Hassan al-Omar, a medical staffer at al-Bab Hospital, said:

"Hearing the explosion, our staffs announced readiness, and urgent cases started to arrive in batches. We hosted 12 injured persons, three had mild injuries and were released immediately, other six had injuries of varying severity, and the remaining three were dead."

STJ's field researcher recorded the names of the victims, both the wounded and the dead. The dead are Abdulsalam Nijm, an unidentified boy and Ibrahim al-Elaiwi. The injured, however, are Mohammad Haboush, Jawhar al-Deek, Mohammad Eid Kazkaz, Tamim Saleh al-Dibs, Ahmad Ismail and Issam Mohammad.

On his turn, Hassan al-Ahmad, a policeman of the Military Police, informed STJ's researcher of the following:

"We were already examining and inspecting all that we doubted within the city, in search of explosive devices, reacting to the reported blasts in other cities, when we heard the sound of an explosion from the direction of the Center Roundabout. The patrols headed there immediately, seeking suspects, who must have been in the vicinity of the blast, especially since they were implementing the explosion by making a call to a bomb attached to a wireless device. Later on, we limited the search to several persons, to then focus on one of them, for he showed indicators. He is yet being investigated."

STJ's field researcher noted that another blast hit the city of al-Bab on December 12, 2018, killing two persons and injuring 11 others. The researcher met several eyewitnesses, one of whom is a civilian from the city by the name of Omar al-Waki, who said:

“At 5:20, before sunset, a motorcycle exploded near the al-Kabeer/Great Mosque, al-Bab city’s center. I was close to the blast’s location, which happened only a short distance away from my neighbor Mohamad al-Sabagh’s shop, who died immediately. The young man who worked for him, belonging to the al-Hamshari family, also died. Seven other persons had wounds of varying severity. Mahmoud al-Hamshari almost survived the explosion, but he heard a strange sound coming from the motorcycle, so he returned to see what was going on. The motorcycle blew up once he touched it.”

The al-Bab al-An/al-Bab Now, a Facebook page, posted [a video](#), it titled as the first seconds of the blast.

STJ's field researcher documented the names of the two dead persons, as Mahmoud al-Hamshari, 18-years-old, and Mohammad al-Sabagh.

The wounded persons, nonetheless, are Alaa al-Saber, 32-years-old, Mohammad Koum, 35-year-old, Yahiya al-Saraqibi, 32-year-old, Mohammad Awad Sharif, 50-year-old, Hussain al-Hussain, 28-year-old, Muhanad Saraqibi, 38-year-old, Mohammad Falaha, 25-year-old, Abbass Houleh, 23-year-old, Abdulmalik Kasoum, 25-year-old, Abu Fahd al-Saraqibi, 20-year-old, and Anass Ibrahim al-Issa, 4-year-old.

On the same note, Alaa Osman, an official of the Military Police in al-Bab city, told STJ's field researcher the following:

“A state of panic and concern overcome al-Bab city following the blast. We received reports about other explosive devices and similar vehicles in the city. The police forces in the city announced a state of readiness, and we found another motorcycle bomb, parked near the location of the first explosion, by the al-Hassan Mosque, only half an hour after the first blast.”

II. Five Bombing Suspects Arrested:

STJ's field researchers reported that the National Army-affiliated Military Police has arrested no less than five persons, suspecting their involvement in the bombings that hit the cities of al-Bab, al-Ghandourah, Qabasin, al-Rai and Azaz, whom it accused of preparations for carrying out further explosions. However, no persons were arrested concerning the blasts that shook Afrin city.

STJ's field researcher quoted a local official of the Military Police as saying:

“Many blasts took place late in 2018 and early in 2019, which caused the death of several civilians. The command of the civil and military police, as well as some of the opposition armed groups, being in the operational state, have tracked numerous suspects, some of whom were arrested. Five have been held captive for having a role in the explosions. The last case of arrest happened on January 29, 2019, in the city of Azaz, while preceded by the arrest of a man and a woman, who claim being married, after they were prosecuted by the security forces of the Liwa Asifat al-Shamal/Storm of the North Legion. The initial investigations indicate that they were riding a car bomb, equipped to blow up in the city of al-Bab on December 17, 2018. The car was coming from Manbij, and it became clear that they were sent to carry out the explosion by a person called Safqan. The two persons are yet being investigated and are detained by the Military Police in Jarabulus, where they are to be subjected to further investigations and related to other networks seeking to conduct explosions in the area.”

STJ's field researcher pointed out that the arrestees are still being investigated by the Military Police and are supposed to be transferred to the Criminal Court in Azaz city, once the investigation is finalized, as to continue the legal proceedings against them.

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

-
- 🌐 www.stj-sy.org
 - 📘 [syriaSTJ](https://www.facebook.com/syriaSTJ)
 - 🗣️ [@STJ_SYRIA_ENG](https://www.instagram.com/@STJ_SYRIA_ENG)
 - 📍 [Syrians for Truth & Justice](https://www.instagram.com/Syrians%20for%20Truth%20%26amp;%20Justice)
 - ✉️ editor@stj-sy.org