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Idlib: Constant Bombardment Destroys Vital Facilities and Leaves Dozen Dead

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The air-ground offensive launched by the Syrian regime and Russia against the province of Idlib and northern Hama continued since late April. The air and ground bombardment, during the period from 1 to 23 June 2019, left 119 civilians dead, including 26 children and 14 women. Besides, three health centers, two hospitals and eight schools were rendered inoperable while 16 mosques destroyed completely or partially.¹ The air bombardment along with the ground battles between the Syrian Army and allies on the one hand and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) on the other in northern rural Hama and southern rural Idlib led to the displacement of up to 90 families.

The offensive coincided with the so-called Sochi talks, which was held on April 24, 2019, is continuing despite the tries to secure a truce between the parties concerned. During May, the fighting resulted in the dead of 235 civilians, among them 56 children and 59 women, and the injury of at least 670 others. Furthermore, no less than 21 health center, 8 hospitals and 23 schools were put out of service, being damaged partly or entirely.²

I. Targeting vital facilities:

Syrian and Russian forces intensified their bombings on the province of Idlib, particularly on its critical infrastructure; hospitals, health centers and schools. In an interview with Abdul Razzaq al-Khalil, the media officer of the Free Idlib Health Directorate (independent institution), stated that the attacks rendered 8 health centers and several hospitals inoperable and left casualties.

Al-Khalil added that the targeted health facilities used to provide medical services to the region's 150.000 people, and each used to admit 6000 patients a month.

1. On **April 28, 2019** air strikes on Qalaat al-Madiq rendered the Latamneh Surgical Hospital and the "111" Hospital for women and children inoperable.
2. On **April 30, 2019** Russian jets targeted the only medical post in the town of Hobait with two successive raids which led to its total destruction. On the same day, the Primary Care Centre in the town was also destroyed but no casualties among the medical staff reported as they cleared the building after it was targeted the night before.
3. On **May 5, 2019** at 5 p.m. The surgical hospital in Kafr Nabl which is known as the "Orient Hospital", was hit with more than 12 thermobaric (vacuum) and concussion missiles by a Russian jet took off from Khmeimim Air Base. The

¹ The destroyed schools, which were active, used to accept 100.000 students a year (in double shifts), while some of them were housing internally displaced people. STJ notes that the school hours have been suspended since the beginning of the offensive.

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missiles caused the death of two civilians and a great destruction to the building and to several neighboring stores.

On **the same day** Syrian Armed forced warplane hit the Sham medical point, killing a nurse and a civilian besides causing damage to the building and to an ambulance.

At 3.30 p.m., **the same day**, Russian jets loaded with thermobaric and concussion missile destroyed the Nabd Al-Hayat hospital in the town of Hass by two successive air strikes.

4. **On June 5, 2019** at 9.00 a.m. the health center of the village of Zerbeh was subjected to bombings, which caused it material damage while at 2 a.m. an air strike hit al-Amal Orthopedic Hospital in Kansafra village destructing it partially.

STJ field researcher also reported the attack of Dar al-Hikma hospital in Kafr Nabl town with high-explosive rockets fired from the Braideej camp in The Ghab Plain/*Sahel al-Ghab* in Hama on May 28, 2019.

Al-Kateeb hospital in Kafr Nabl was also rocked with missiles on June 3, 2019.

The local activist Ahmed Khateeb told STJ that the school complex in Kansafra village was hit with two consecutive barrel bombs on May 7, 2019, which led to the total destruction of the Basic Girls School and the partial damage of al-Muhaddatha and al-Refia schools. On May 8, 2019 the same school complex bombed again, and a slight damage caused to al-Ziraa school.



The damage caused to one of Kansafra schools on June 4, 2019. Photo credit: STJ.



The destruction caused to a school in the village of Qasabiyeh on June 4, 2019. Photo credit: STJ.

II. Field conditions and casualties:

STJ field researcher talked to Muhammad Hamroush, the press secretary of the White Helmets who confirmed the death of seven medical personnel, three civil defense volunteers and the two media men Amjad Bakeir, a war reporter for the Free Idlib Army, and Hassan al-Younis, a reporter for the Free Police of the Salvation Government, which is the political and service front of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), during May and June 2019.

On June 20, 2019, Violet Organization for Relief and Development [reported](#) the death of three of its medics and the serious injury of three others. The victims who are, Sael Bahloul, Muhammad Mustafa and Abdul Qadir Nahtan, killed in a direct air attack on the ambulance they were in, aiding wounded civilians resulted from bombardments on the city of Ma`arat al-Nu`man.

The STJ field researcher in the province of Idlib quoted the Response Coordinators team in northern Syria confirming that the southern rural areas witnessed the displacement of an estimated 90.000 families.

The researcher added that 27 cities and towns in rural northern Hama became depopulated while only 10% of the population of Kafr Nabl, Kansafra and Jarjanaz remained.

Regarding the changes in the map of control, STJ researcher reported that the Syrian Army managed to retake the town of Qalaat Al Madiq and the villages of al-Hwaiz, al-Sharia'a, al-Kirkat, Bab al-Taqa, Qasabiyeh, Qiratah and Tell Hawash. Whereas HTS backed by the Army of Glory/*Jaysh al-Izza*, The Army of Victory/*Jaysh al-Nasr* and the National Front for Liberation, managed to control the towns of Tal Meleh, Jibeen and a part of Jalamah, since the beginning of the military operations on April 27, 2019, as of the date of this report.

STJ field researcher documented the aftermaths of the three most vicious attacks on Idlib this month, as he managed to get to the targeted sites soon after the attacks:

- 1- On **June 10, 2019** a residential complex in the village of Jbala, Idlib was raided. STJ researcher documented-from the scene- the death of three young men from the collapse of their house's ceiling over their heads. The researcher also reported the pick of four children's bodies from rubbles by their relatives though the warplanes were still in the village's sky.

The activist Muhammad Bala'as who also headed to the targeted site said that he saw houses destructed over the heads of their inhabitants while the people were unable to pluck the victims from the rubble. He also reported seeing three young men dead from the collapse of their house ceiling with no possibility to be rescued by the people. The activist confirmed that four or five children turned into pieces, which were collected by the people and placed on a cloth on sight of their mother who was in a very bad psychological condition. Noting that excavators and lifting equipment arrived the site 45 minutes after the attack.

According to Ubada Thikra, head of the civil defense sector in the city of Ma`arat al-Nu`man, the casualty count from the attack is 13 dead and around 15 injured. STJ field researcher asserted that the targeted area is entirely civilian, that what used to make it relatively safe and almost spared from bombings. Noting that the nearest station of insurgents is about 8 km. away from the village, which is a checkpoint of the National Front for Liberation.

The field researcher quoted Nader Observatory saying that the Syrian forces' Sukhoi Su-24 took off from the T4 Military Airbase in Homs at 6.13p.m on June 10, 2019 and dropped two thermobaric missiles on the area. It is reported that the jet changed its course several times and circled over southern rural areas before it carried out the attack in the depopulated town of Hobait.



Rescuing the wounded resulted from air strikes on the village of Jbala, rural Idlib on June 10, 2019.
Photo credit: STJ

- 2- Further, on **June 10, 2019** the residential zone near the main square of the village of Ma'ar Shoreen was rocked with an air strike. STJ field researcher confirmed that the attack occurred at 1.00 p.m., and he quoted the local source Hikmat saying that the raid was conducted by a Sukhoi Su-22 which dropped four thermobaric missiles killing three civilians and injuring 45 others. Besides, four houses and seven shops were destroyed.

The field researcher asserted that that the village is free of any military presence and that the nearest military point to the attacked site is about 7 km. away. A checkpoint of the Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya was previously around the attacked area, but it was removed, however, early this year.



The consequences of the bombing on the village of Ma'ar Shoreen, Idlib, on June 10, 2019.
Photo credit: STJ.

- 3- On **June 19, 2019** a Sukhoi Su-24 rocked the village of Benin in Jabal Zawiya with a thermobaric missile which resulted in the destruction of three stores one for ice cream and another for deserts while the third was a fodder store. The raid also killed 12 civilians and injured three others.

STJ field researcher quoted the local source Hikmat saying that a pro-regime fighter jet, which carried out the raid, took off from the al-Seen Air Force Base in Homs at 5 p.m.

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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.

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 - ✉ editor@stj-sy.org