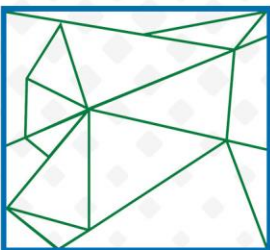


Syria: Visual Analysis of the Bloody Attack on al-Bab City



سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



February 2023

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Grad rockets hit the city in August 2022, launched from the areas jointly controlled by the Syrian government and YPG

On 19 August 2022, at around 10:45 a.m., indiscriminate rocket strikes rocked the [al-Bab](#) city in Aleppo province. The city is under the control of the Turkish military and the opposition's Syrian National Army (SNA).

The perpetrators launched six rockets at the city's eastern parts, which landed in vital spots and relatively close to each other. The attack killed 15 people, among them women and children, and wounded nearly 30 others.

In this brief report, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) investigates the attack, identifies the type of used rockets, and marks out the targeted locations.

To this end, over the past months, STJ collected open-source visuals about the attack and obtained exclusive footage of the remnants of the fired ammunition. Additionally, STJ interviewed civilian eyewitnesses who happened to be present at the hit sites.

While the visual analyses corroborated that the perpetrators used Russian Grad rockets in at least two strikes, field researchers with STJ identified three of the bombarded sites. The sites are all located in the eastern part of the city, which the locals call the Old Thursday Marketplace. Three rockets dropped in this area, landing on the [marketplace](#), [Erzurum school](#), and a third nearby location.

The digital forensic expert with STJ identified the remaining targeted spots, following leads on the locations appearing in open-source footage of the attack.

The attack killed at least 15 civilians, including eight children, one woman, and seven men, and injured nearly 30 others, among them nine children, two women, and 12 men.

Notably, this is not the first time al-Bab has suffered hostilities of this scale. In a 2022 April [report](#), STJ documented similar Grad rocket attacks on the city that also took a toll on civilians.



Image (1)- A photo taken from a hilltop in al-Bab city, showing the onset of the rocket attack. Credit: [Ahmad al-Shebli](#).

STJ mapped out the exact locations where the rockets landed in the al-Bab city on 19 August 2022 by matching the marked sites in the above-listed live photo with satellite imagery.

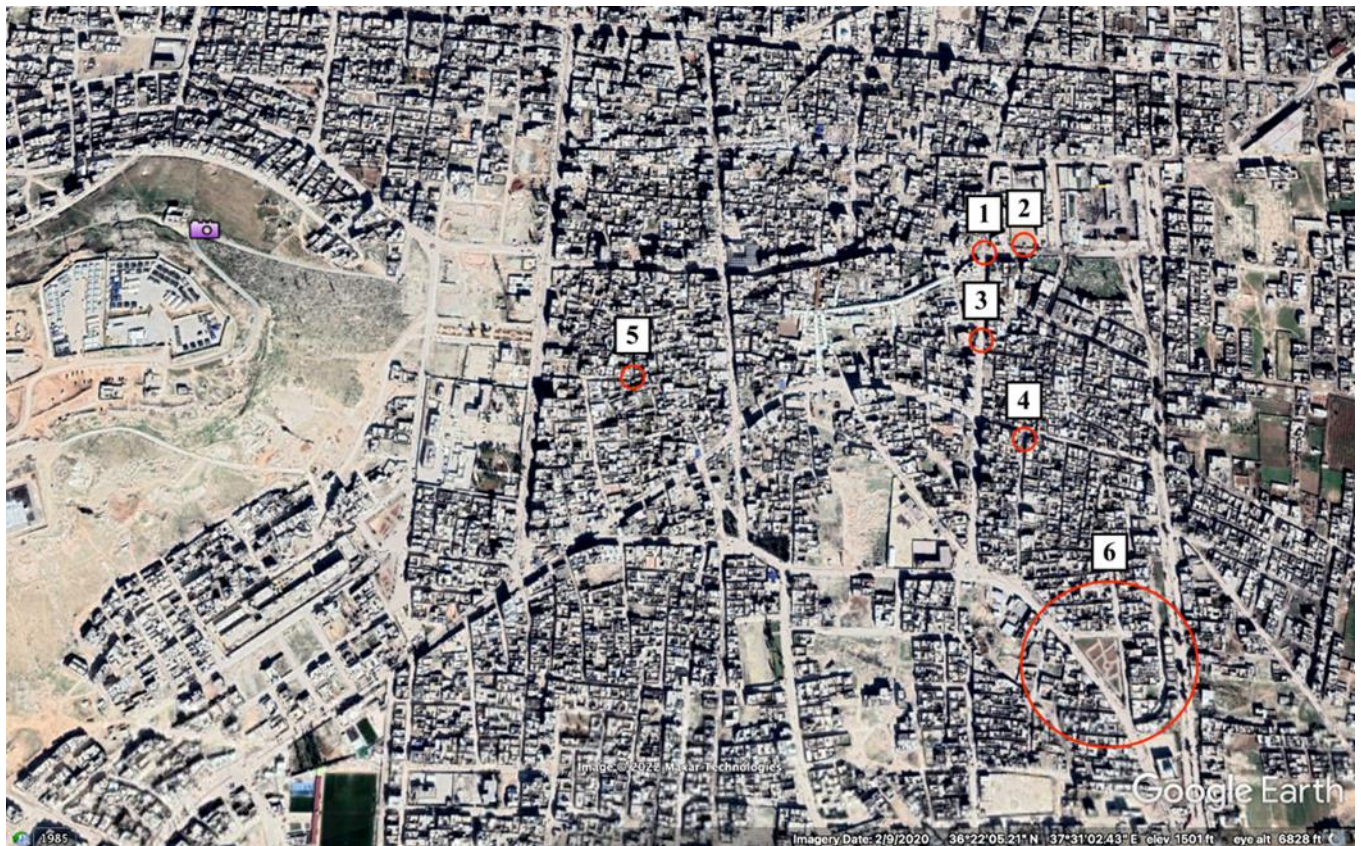


Image (2)- STJ-designed map of the targeted locations.

The rocket strikes on al-Bab followed a Turkish drone attack on al-Hasakah province on 18 August 2022. The Turkish military targeted an UN-funded [school](#) in the province, [located](#) between al-Hasakah city and Tall Tamr town, 50 KM from the Syria-Turkey border. The attack killed five girls and injured 11 others.

On 20 August, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Imran Riza, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Muhannad Hadi, and UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Adele Khodr, issued a joint [statement](#) condemning the attacks in al-Hasakah and al-Abab cities. They also expressed deep concern about the continuing escalation of hostilities in northern Syria.



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للتنشر الفوري

بيان صادر عن قائد قوة المهام المشتركة - عملية العزم الصلب
بخصوص الغارة الجوية في شمال شرق سوريا التي أسفرت عن سقوط ضحايا مدنيين

بيان صادر عن اللواء جون برينان، قائد قوة المهام المشتركة - عملية العزم الصلب

"في مساء يوم 18 آب / أغسطس ، أصابت منظومة جوية مسلحة بدون طيار مجموعة من الفتيات وهن يلعبن كرة الطائرة. إن هؤلاء الفتيات هم من الناشطات في برنامج التوعية التعليمية للأمم المتحدة في الحسكة. تشير التقارير الأولية إلى أن الغارة أسفرت عن مقتل أربعة أشخاص وتسببت بجرح عدد آخر. بالنيابة عن قوة المهام المشتركة - عملية العزم الصلب، أدین هذا الهجوم وأي هجوم آخر يتسبب بقتل أو إصابة المدنيين.

"إن مثل هذه الأعمال تتعارض مع قوانين النزاع المسلح التي تتطلب حماية المدنيين. نتقدم بالتعازي لأسر القتلى والمواساة للمصابين.

"إن زيادة الأعمال العدائية العسكرية في شمال سوريا تخلق حالة من الفوضى في منطقة هشة حيث لا يزال تهديد داعش قائماً. ندعو إلى وقف فوري للتصعيد من جميع الأطراف وإنهاء الأنشطة التي تعرض المكاسب الكبيرة التي حققها التحالف في ساحة المعركة ضد داعش للخطر."

-30-

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1

Image (3)- Screenshot of a statement by the Commander of the Combined Joint Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve, condemning the attack on a school in northeastern Syria on 18 August 2022. ([Source](#)).

Targeted Sites

1. The Old Marketplace

The perpetrators targeted the al-Bab city with six rockets. One rocket landed on a median strip in the Old Marketplace (Location: 37.520898, 36.370573), while another hit a schoolyard near the market (Location: 36.370981, 37.521863).

STJ obtained the first-hand accounts of two internally displaced persons (IDPs) who saw the rockets explode in the marketplace.

The first eyewitness is originally from Idlib province and today lives in the al-Bab city. He narrated:

"I was in my shop in the Old Market when the shells fell. Two people from my area died near the shop's door. I saw them put their body parts in black bags. My brother and his son were also wounded. I saw the victims' dead bodies and remains; it was a horrific sight. The situation is unbearable . . . No places are left to which we could escape; they are all unsafe. Turkey controls this area, and we sought shelter because we thought it safe, but it is not; shells hit us every week."

The second eyewitness, also al-Bab-based IDP, was at the marketplace when the rockets crashed into the site. He recounted:

"There were many children on the street when the shelling occurred. I saw children die in the bombing while they sold bread in their stalls a second ago. My neighbor and his son were also injured. What happened is beyond description, and the locals are grief-stricken because many people died."



Image (4)- Screenshot from surveillance camera [footage](#) posted by Amro Refai. The footage captures the instant two rockets landed on a schoolyard and in the middle of a main street.



Image (5)- Screenshot taken from the footage mentioned above, showing the targeted location before the attack, with the rockets' landing spots marked with blue, yellow, and red.



Image (6)- The surveillance footage matched with satellite imagery.



Image (7)- The damage the rocket inflicted upon the schoolyard. ([Source](#)).

In addition to the open-source photos and videos, STJ obtained exclusive footage of the remnants of rockets and projectiles the perpetrators used in the attack. STJ forwarded the visuals to the digital forensic expert to determine the type of ammunition.

The expert identified the type of ammunition that landed in at least two of the bombarded sites as Grad rockets, which the forces of the Syrian government, the People's Protection Units (YPG), and other parties in the conflict occasionally use.



Image (8)- One of the rockets that hit al-Bab city on 19 August 2022.



Image (9)- Photo of the above-mentioned projectile, captured from a different angle.



Image (10)- A close-up of the above-mentioned projectile.



Image (11)- The landing spot of one of the rockets that hit the Old Marketplace. ([Source](#)).



Image (12)- Satellite images matched with the live photo above to define the rockets' launch angle, given that Grad rockets have a range of about 15 to 30 KM.

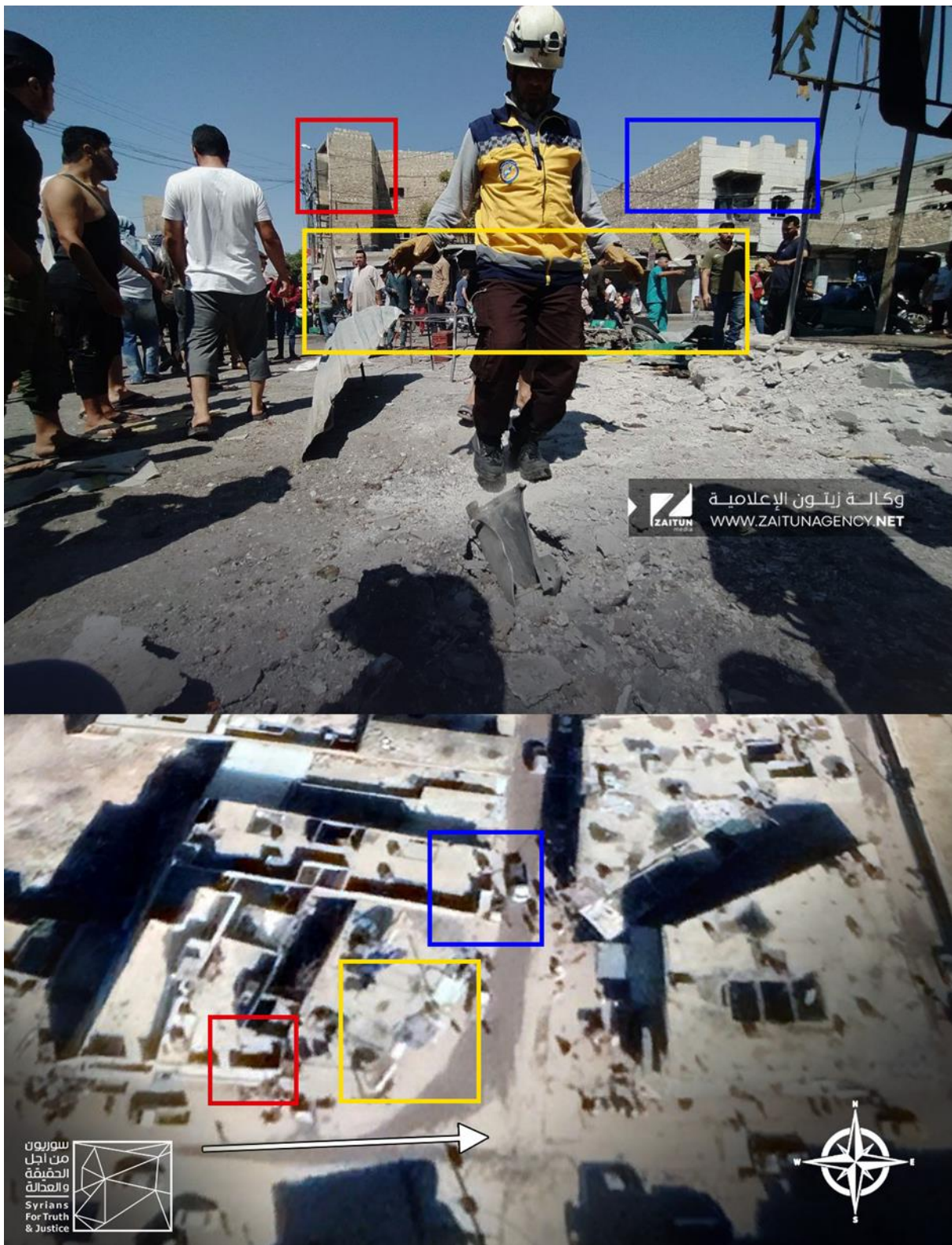


Image (13)- A live photo matched with a satellite close-up, whereby the white arrow points to the rocket's landing spot and direction.

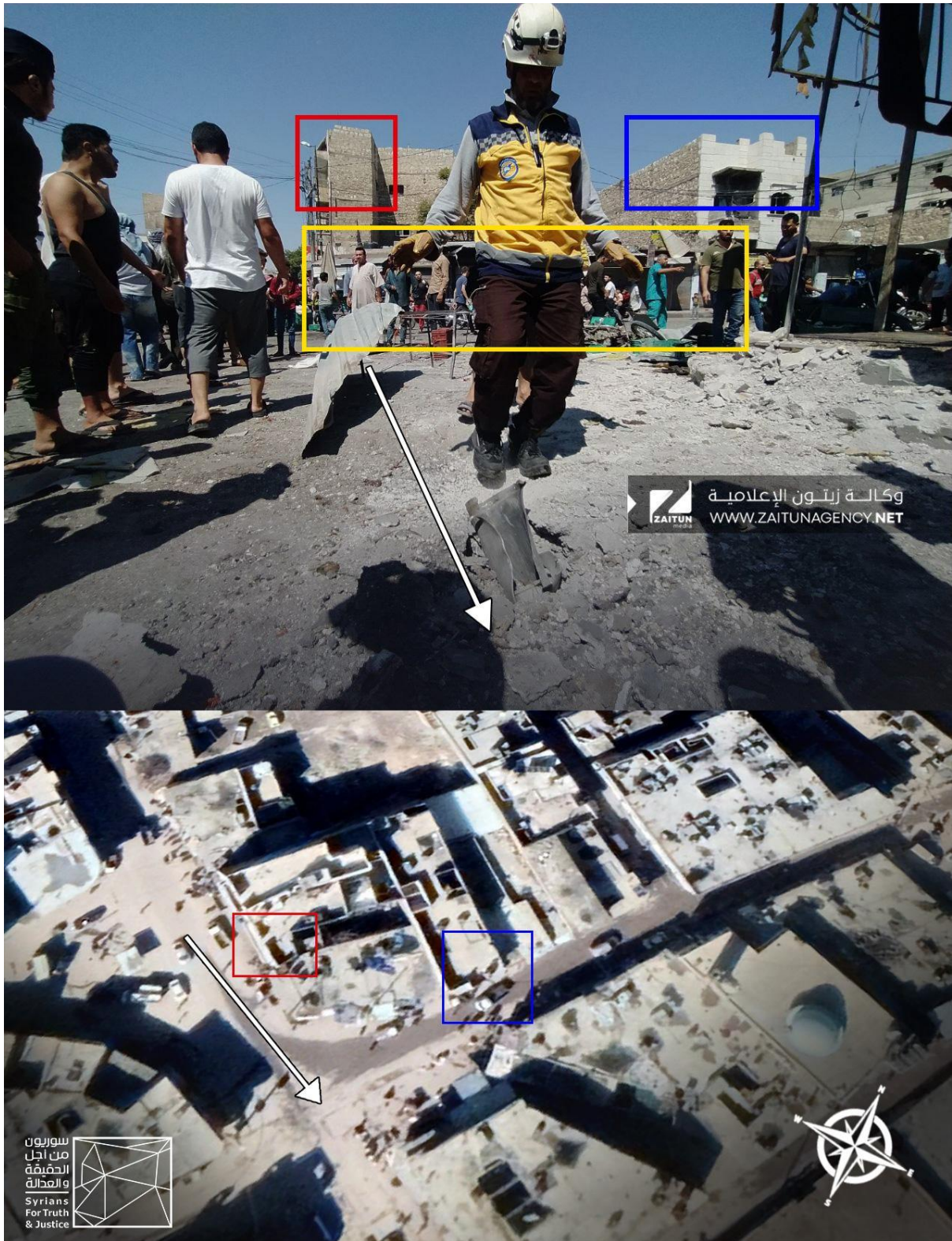
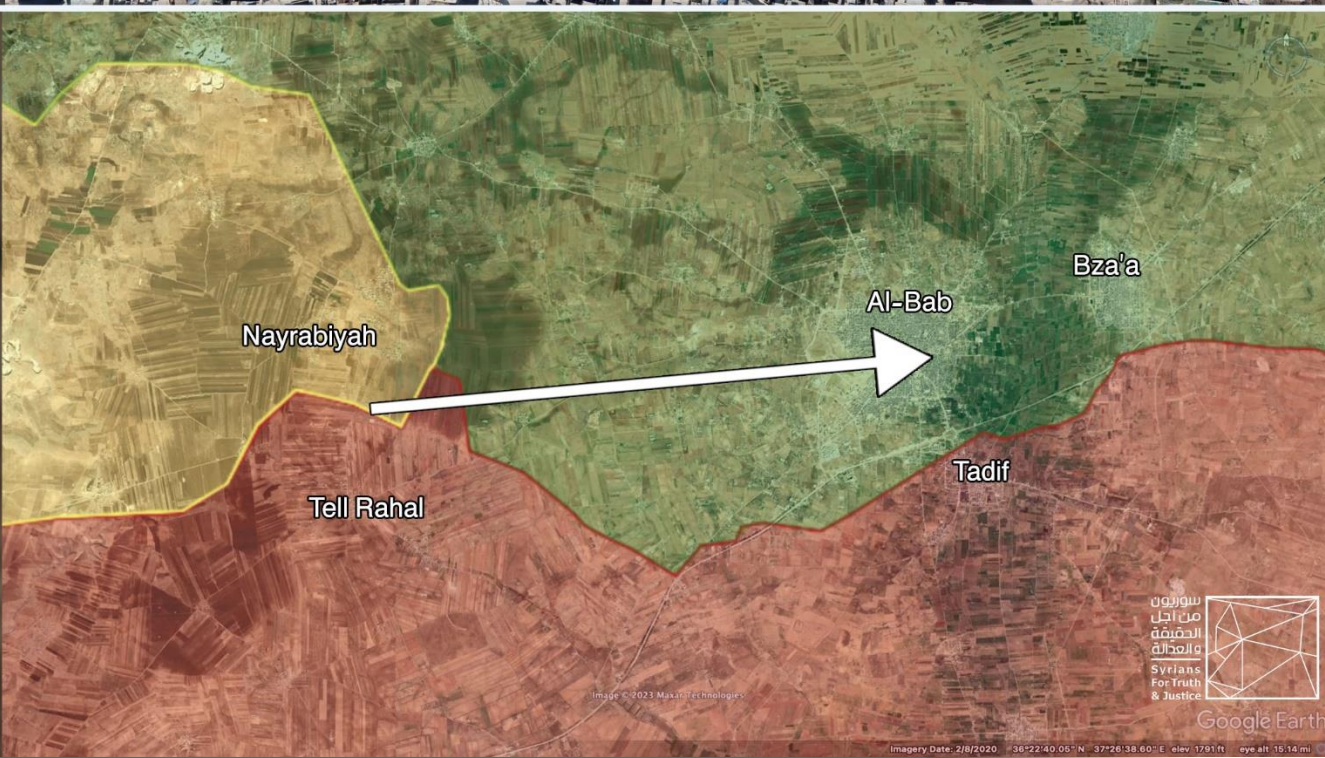


Image (14)- A live photo matched with a satellite close-up, whereby the white arrow points to the rocket's landing spot and direction, which hit at a north latitude, tilted a little to the right.

Image (15)- The photo merges three satellite images, marking out the location from which the rockets were fired (an area jointly controlled by the Russian military, the forces of the Syrian government and the People's Protection Units (YPG)).



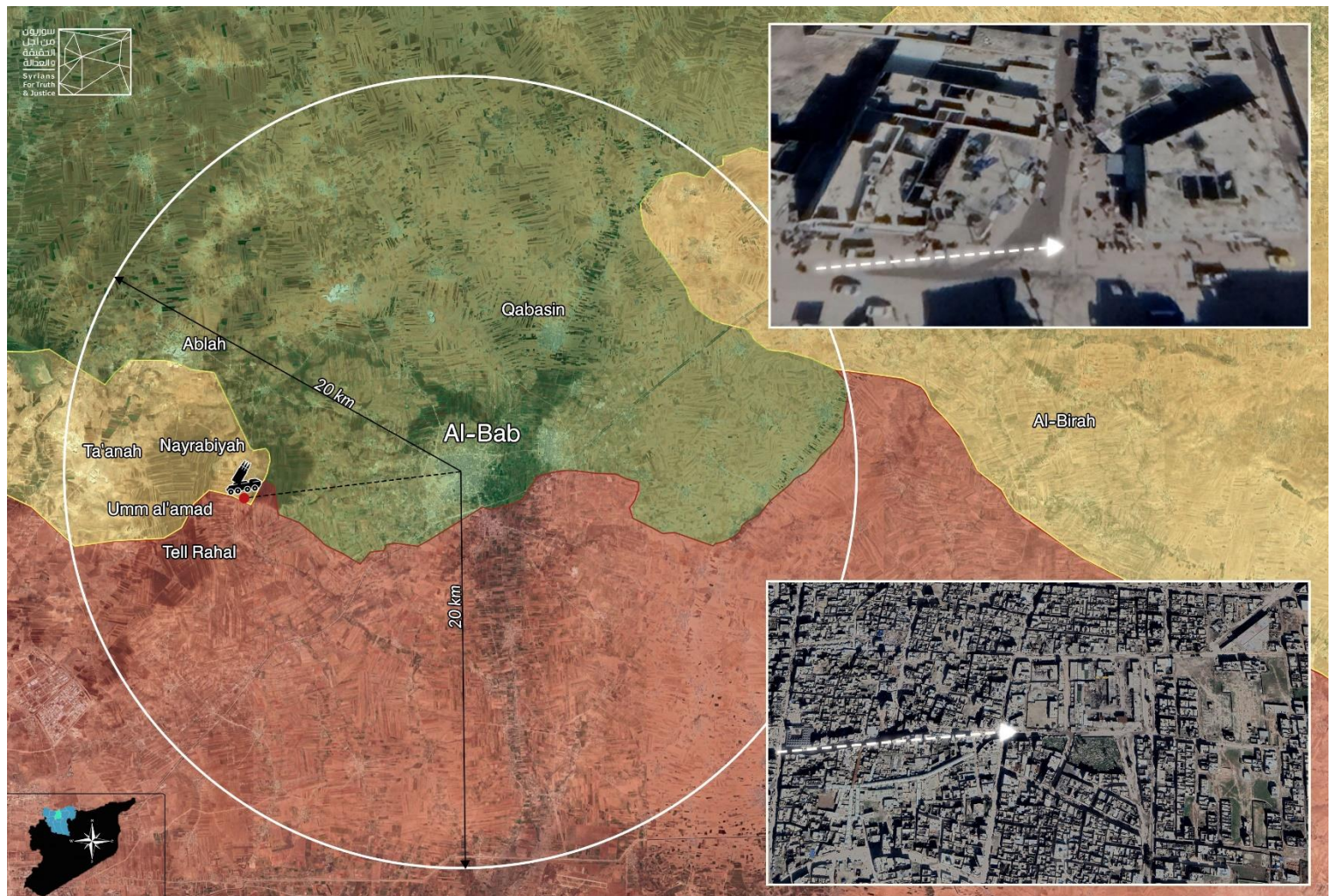


Image (16)- The photo merges different visuals, identifying the rockets' launching angle.

2. A Main Street

A third rocket landed 135 M [away from](#) the rocket that hit the Old Marketplace (Location: 37.520755, 36.369350). Several open-source platforms captured the extent of damage the rocket caused.



Image (17)- The location where the rocket landed is only 135 M away from the targeted site in the Old Marketplace. ([Source](#)).



Image (18)- The above-listed live image matched with satellite imagery. (Location: [36.369350, 37.520755](#)).

STJ obtained exclusive images of the rocket used in the attack on the main street.



Image (19)- A rocket's outer casing locals found after the attack.

The rockets the perpetrators used to attack al-Bab city are identical to those used in the assault on Al-Shifaa Hospital on 12 June 2021, which STJ investigated in a previous [report](#) (See images 14 and 16 in the said report).



Image (20)- A rocket's outer casing locals found after the attack.



Image (21)- A rocket's outer casing locals found after the attack.

3. A House in al-Bab's Eastern Neighborhood

The fourth rocket hit a [house](#) in the eastern neighborhood of al-Bab city (Location: [36.367916, 37.521347](#)). STJ collected information about the attack and its impact on the affected home through open-source platforms.



Image (22)- A photo merging images from three separate sources, showing the fourth rocket's landing spot and the devastation it caused. (Sources [1](#) and [2](#)).



Image (23)- The above-listed photo matched with satellite images.

4. Across From the PTT Center

The fifth rocket landed in the city's southern [part](#), across from the Post Office ([PTT](#)). (Landing spot: [36.368883, 37.514977](#)).



Image (24)-The photo merges several images from different sources, showing the landing spot of the rocket and the destruction it caused. (Sources [1](#) and [2](#)).



Image (25)- The above-listed photo matched with satellite imagery.



Image (26)- The PTT center across from which the fifth rocket landed. ([Source](#)).



Image (27)- The photo marks out both the rocket's landing spot in red and the PPT center's location in yellow.

5. Near al-Raheb Park

The sixth rocket landed near [al-Raheb Park](#), particularly at the Asia Pharmacy intersection.

The Source of the Attack

An observatory in the city and several military sources testified to STJ that the rockets landed on al-Bab were fired from the radar station in Sha'alah village. The sources pointed out that the Syrian government forces and the YPG jointly control this area.

Notably, this station was where the rockets landed on al-Bab on 2 February 2022 also originated.

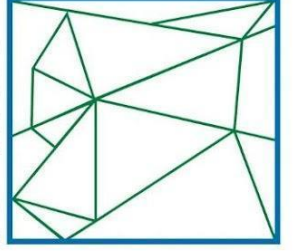
One of the military sources STJ interviewed said:

"On Friday, 19 August, we detected a drone flying over the city. The shelling started soon after and the rockets landed on the marketplace. We located the firing source as being the Sha'ala Radar Station. We informed the Turkish military, which responded to the shelling. The Turkish military bombarded the Sha'alah village. However, we have no verified information as to the extent of damage the shelling had incurred at the hit site."

Notably, platforms affiliated with several armed opposition groups reported that the factions bombarded areas jointly controlled by the Syrian government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in retaliation to the attack on al-Bab city.



Image (28)- Screenshot of the Twitter account of the SNA's 3rd Legion. In the post, the legion says that they initiated a rocket attack on the Syrian government and SDF-held areas in response to the attack on al-Bab ([Source](#)).



About Us:

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization monitoring human rights violations in Syria. Founded in 2015, STJ has been based in France since 2019.

STJ is an impartial and independent Syrian human rights organization operating across Syria. Our network of field researchers monitor and report human rights violations occurring on the ground in Syria, while our international team of human rights experts, lawyers, and journalists gather evidence, examine emerging patterns of violations, and analyze how violations break domestic Syrian and international law.

We are committed to documenting violations of human rights committed by all parties in the Syrian conflict and elevating the voices of all Syrians victimized by human rights violations, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, class, and/or gender. Our commitment to human rights monitoring is founded on the idea that professional human rights documentation meeting international standards is the first step to uncovering the truth and achieving justice in Syria.



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