**UN Human Rights Office**

**The Extent of Conflict-Related Deaths in the Syrian Arab Republic – Background Note**

The UN Human Rights Office’s work on updating the extent of conflict-related deaths in the Syrian Arab Republic between March 2011 and March 2021 found that that there were **350,209 identified deaths. This figure includes both civilian and non-civlian deaths.** The statistical work also led to a more detailed breakdown and analysis of the information, contained in the tables *A1, A2, A3 and A4* below.

**Why was this analysis carried out?**

In 2013 and 2014, the UN Human Rights Office commissioned three statistical analyses of conflict-related deaths in Syria. However, the situation in Syria that year grew more complex and dangerous, affecting the Office’s capacity to maintain the required quality and verification standards, and the decision was taken to suspend the work. In March 2021, a UN Human Rights Council resolution requested the Office to resume its work to fully assess the number of people killed as a result of 10 years of conflict.

**What was the methodology?**

The statistical work builds on previous efforts, following a **strict methodology**. There was a call for submissions about casualties during the 10 years of conflict. Previously obtained information was also analysed. Hundreds of thousands of records had to be reviewed and compared to avoid duplication.

Any information that did not include the **full name, established date of death and the governorate in which the person died was excluded.** We believe the total of 350,209 to be statistically sound – based as it is on a rigorous approach, and therefore informative. But it is not, and cannot hope to be, the complete number of conflict-related killings in Syria during this period. It indicates a **minimum verifiable number**.

Given the scope of the work, the UN Human Rights Office contracted the **Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG).** This is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that applies scientific methods to the analysis of human rights violations around the world. They have provided their expertise to truth and reconciliation commissions, UN missions, human rights bodies and international and domestic criminal tribunal. HRDAG supported the UN Human Rights Office’s earlier statistical analyses of conflict-related deaths in Syria in 2013-2014.

**What were the sources of information?**

The sources included six civil society organizations, including those collecting raw data on the ground; the Syrian Government; and the UN Human Rights Office’s own data. Specifically:

1. Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS) – March 2011 – December 2018.

2. Center for Statistics and Research – Syria (CSR-SY) – March 2011 – March 2021

3. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) – March 2011 – March 2021

4. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) – March 2011 – March 2021

5. Violations Documentation Center (VDC) – March 2011 – February 202 (records scraped from their website with permission)

6. Records shared by the Syrian Government- March 2011 – November 2012

7. Records HRDAG downloaded from the Syria Shuhada (SS) website with permission – March 2011 – May 2014

8. Civilian casualty records from the Monitoring and Reporting Unit, Syria Country Office of the Un Human Rights Office - January 2019 – March 2021

**How reliable is the analysis?**

It is important to note that documenting conflict-related killings is extremely difficult and dangerous in the midst of a conflict. For this analysis, CSR-SY, DCHRS, SOHR and SNHR provided updated data which we used. Due to various challenges they face (e.g. security risks, severance of communication networks, lack of internet access, the large number of parties involved in the conflict, etc.), these groups continually update their databases as new or more accurate information becomes available from continuing investigations.  To give an example, we reported in August 2014 that a total of 191,369 individuals had been killed through to the end of April 2014. Based on the updated and reviewed data, the revised total from 2011 through to the end of 2014 now stands at 176,103 – see the tables below.

**What can and can’t the data tell us?**

Based on the work, we have not only the total number of deaths but also disaggregated according to **year, gender and whether an adult or child**. It is important to note that the documented deaths refer to individuals – **both civilians and non-civilians.** It is important not to draw conclusions about perceived patterns.

**How will or can this analysis be used?**

Documenting who died and how they died is key to the effective realization of a range of fundamental human rights – including the rights to know the truth, to accountability, and to effective remedy. It can also facilitate survivors' access to property, education and health-care. It is vital that information is available for accountability and other processes to pursue victims’ rights. The information we have produced can provide a basis for judicial and other processes to prioritise preliminary investigations. The disaggregation of deaths by sex, age, location and date can also support policy decision-making, for example on the provision of remedies or specific types of support to be given to female-headed households or minors.

**What are the next steps?**

We have begun processing information on **who is alleged to have caused deaths**; **whether the victim was a civilian or not;** and **the type of weapon** that caused their death. We are also going to pursue established statistical estimation techniques to account for undocumented victims and so give a more complete picture of the scale of the conflict and its impact on Syria. This analysis will estimate the number of deaths not documented by any of the sources we used or who were excluded from our current analysis because of missing information. These estimates will be appropriate for drawing conclusions about **patterns of violence**, such as did violence increase or decrease from 2015 to 2016 and where were more people killed. We will continue to explore other statistical analyses and ensure that we maximize the use of the information provided by those recording casualty data, often facing huge challenges and indeed risks to themselves.

Table A1: Documented Deaths by year

### 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021

 **Total** 10,105 60,873 58,532 46,593 49,959 45,117 34,331 23,372 12,324 7,729 1,274

Table A2: Documented Deaths by governorate and year

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **Al-Hasaka** | 92 | 689 | 699 | 701 | 1,251 | 760 | 395 | 614 | 1,129 | 329 | 162 |
| **Aleppo** | 235 | 7,234 | 8,348 | 7,949 | 7,406 | 10,600 | 2,944 | 4,308 | 1,295 | 1,197 | 215 |
| **ar-Raqqah** | 44 | 587 | 922 | 624 | 468 | 1,015 | 2,514 | 859 | 713 | 284 | 69 |
| **As-Suwayda** | 106 | 878 | 1,034 | 1,109 | 1,611 | 1,268 | 689 | 279 | 42 | 64 | 21 |
| **Damascus** | 317 | 3,357 | 3,730 | 2,108 | 1,779 | 1,027 | 1,213 | 882 | 221 | 278 | 3 |
| **Daraa** | 1,190 | 3,908 | 4,367 | 3,764 | 3,204 | 1,812 | 1,665 | 1,279 | 305 | 404 | 156 |
| **Deir ez-Zor** | 405 | 3,785 | 2,415 | 2,778 | 2,157 | 2,468 | 3,286 | 2,900 | 1,543 | 735 | 290 |
| **Hama** | 1,424 | 5,809 | 4,455 | 3,946 | 4,064 | 3,398 | 4,099 | 1,729 | 2,082 | 845 | 142 |
| **Homs** | 3,062 | 9,374 | 7,474 | 4,946 | 5,544 | 4,801 | 3,734 | 1,243 | 272 | 501 | 35 |
| **Idlib** | 1,173 | 6,332 | 4,092 | 3,204 | 3,704 | 3,647 | 2,974 | 2,288 | 3,892 | 1,831 | 134 |
| **Latakia** | 775 | 4,440 | 4,023 | 3,477 | 5,347 | 4,672 | 3,368 | 808 | 625 | 876 | 9 |
| **Quneitra** | 48 | 420 | 686 | 722 | 547 | 375 | 290 | 56 | 18 | 25 | 17 |
| **Rural Damascus** | 714 | 10,058 | 11,407 | 6,833 | 7,000 | 4,361 | 2,804 | 4,070 | 141 | 74 | 21 |
| **Tartus** | 520 | 4,002 | 4,880 | 4,432 | 5,877 | 4,913 | 4,356 | 2,057 | 46 | 286 | 0 |

Table A3: Documented Deaths by sex and year

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **Female** | 325 | 4,135 | 5,193 | 3,517 | 3,547 | 3,770 | 2,613 | 2,033 | 1,052 | 423 | 119 |
| **Male** | 9,778 | 56,082 | 51,557 | 41,354 | 45,651 | 41,300 | 31,698 | 11,139 | 4,877 | 2,787 | 1,154 |
| **Unknown** | 2 | 656 | 1,782 | 1,722 | 761 | 47 | 20 | 10,200 | 6,395 | 4,519 | 1 |

Table A4: Documented Deaths by age group and year

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **Adult** 8,713 | 53,202 | 48,809 | 39,351 | 43,627 | 38,225 | 29,004 | 6,759 | 3,212 | 1,586 | 1,065 |
|  **Child** 591 | 4,692 | 5,109 | 3,502 | 3,379 | 3,741 | 2,337 | 2,058 | 1,144 | 418 | 155 |
| **Unknown** 801 | 2,979 | 4,614 | 3,740 | 2,953 | 3,151 | 2,990 | 14,555 | 7,968 | 5,725 | 54 |