# Death Shadows Us: The Aftermath of Turkish Attacks on Northeast Syria During the First Half of 2024



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The scenes of civilians' suffering are repeated with every strike Turkey carries out on areas of northeast Syria. These stories are not just figures; they are rather a painful embodiment of the exorbitant cost paid by the civilians as a result of the Turkish attacks that disregard humanitarian laws



# **Executive Summary:**

This report covers the total toll of Turkish attacks on areas in northeast Syria during the first half of 2024, whether they were carried out by warplanes and drones, or through artillery shelling and rockets. These attacks caused civilian deaths and injuries, as well as destroyed infrastructure and facilities indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Since early 2024, the Turkish Army has bombarded areas of northeast Syria- at least 345 times, killing 11 civilians, including a child, while injuring 51, among them were seven children and six women. In addition, dozens of critical facilities, such as health centers, power transfer stations, and oil and gas fields were deliberately targeted and destroyed, denying the local population from electricity, water, and gas for months.

The Turkish attacks, launched by artillery shelling and rockets, caused the most excessive loss of civilian lives in northeast Syria during the first half of 2024. Synergy Association for Victims documented 243 bombardments that killed 10 civilians and injured 25 others. Additionally, 102 warplane and drone attacks were documented, in which one child was killed and 26 others were injured, including seven children and six women.

The stories documented by Synergy indicate that Turkey deliberately implemented a pattern of double and consecutive airstrikes, bombarding the same site more than once, which increased the numbers of casualties and caused additional destruction. The strikes also targeted civilians who attempted to rescue the victims.

In its attacks on northeast Syria, Turkey did not regard the protection of civilians' lives according to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL)'s principle of proportionality. It caused excessive loss of civilian lives, exposed them to injuries, and inflicted damages to civilian objects. The analysis of data documented by Synergy during the first half of 2024, shows that the Turkish attacks had resulted in the death of 11 civilians and the injury of 51 others, while killing nine fighters and injuring 24 members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on the other hand.

The Turkish attacks have had a disastrous impact on civilians' lives in areas in northeast Syria which host approximately one million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). These attacks exacerbated the already existing humanitarian crisis, and damaged many residential areas, service and health facilities and critical installations, in addition to small factories and firms at a time when the region's economy is in free fall and its infrastructure is already severely deteriorated.

The <u>Northeast Syria (NES) NGO Forum</u> (NES Forum), a coalition of international organizations operating in the region, stated that since October 5, 2023, Turkish attacks have contributed in undermining the efforts of non-governmental organizations and negatively affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Multiple organizations providing vital services have limited their activities from routine to life-saving (i.e. primary health



care). Continuation of service delivery for NGOs cannot be assured should the hostilities persist due to operational risks and safety concerns for staff and beneficiaries.

In a subsequent <u>statement</u> published on January 29, 2024, regarding Turkish attacks against northeast Syria, the NES NGO Forum reported that: more than one million people in the cities and villages have been cut off from electricity; and over 1.4 million further people have limited access to safe drinking water. The damage to medical facilities, targeted in December 2023, has disrupted the oxygen supply to more than 12 private and public hospitals. Strikes have disrupted activities in 38 health facilities, increasing the risks of <u>water-borne diseases</u>. The NES NGO Forum warned that "the scale of damage far supersedes the humanitarian community's capacity to sustain emergency life-saving service provision."

Under the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) "Attacking, destroying, removing, or rendering useless objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population is prohibited." By directly targeting, and deliberately demolishing, power stations, oil and gas installations, health centers, and other civilian facilities in northeast Syria, Turkey is violating its obligations to the IHL and the International Human Rights Law (IHRL), and its actions amount to war crimes.

#### Introduction:

Since May 2022, the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has been threatening to launch a new military incursion into northeast Syria. This has been followed by repeated and continuous aggressions on the region's cities and towns. Synergy documented the killing of 111 civilians, including 13 children and 10 women, and the injury of 364 others (including 31 children and 19 women) as a result of Turkish attacks on areas in northeast Syria during 2022, 2023, and the first half of 2024.

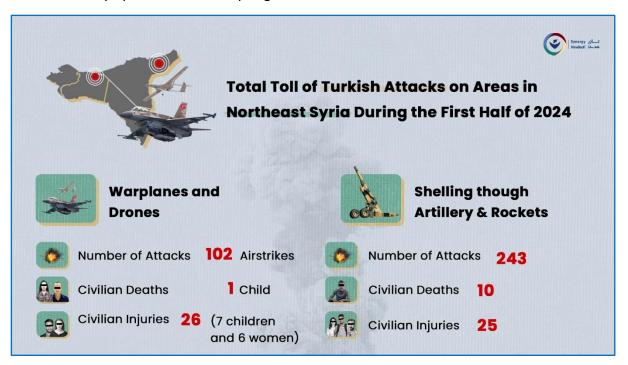
The people of northeast Syria are experiencing constant fear and a profound sense of insecurity and instability due to the repeated and openly conducted Turkish attacks, in plain sight and view of the international community. This situation has led to a significant increase in illegal immigration in search of humanitarian asylum, more than any other time since the conflict in Syria started.

Since early 2024, Turkey has conducted at least 345 strikes on areas in northeast Syria, targeting critical infrastructure and civilian installations, including health centers, power transfer stations, oil and gas fields, as well as small factories and businesses.

The Turkish attacks on areas in northeast Syria- comprising 102 airstrikes with warplanes and drones, and 243 instances of artillery and rockets- have killed 11 civilians, among them a child, while injured 51, including seven children and six women. These attacks have left millions of civilians without access to gas, electricity, and clean water.



The Turkish aggressions targeted all areas in northeast Syria on the Syrian-Turkish border and al-Shahbaa region in northern Aleppo, although it is included in the <u>Deescalation</u>/Ceasefire Agreement signed between Turkey, the <u>US</u> and <u>Russia</u>, following the Turkish military operation "Peace Spring" in October 2019.



Despite the fact that Turkish attacks on areas in northeast Syria during 2022 and 2023 resulted in the death of at least 100 civilians (including 12 children and 10 women) and injures to 313 people (among them 24 children and 13 women), as Documented by Synergy, the intensity of these attacks has escalated since October 2023. This escalation followed the Turkish government's official <u>announcement</u> that its operations would target infrastructure, superstructure, and energy sources in northeast Syria.

The Turkish threat was announced by Hakan Fidan, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, who stated on October 4, 2023, that "all infrastructure, superstructure, and energy installations- affiliated to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Protection Units (YPG)- in Syria and Iraq have become legitimate targets for our security, military, and intelligence forces." This statement followed an attack on the Ministry of Interior Affairs headquarters in Ankara, in which two police officers were injured. However, the General Commander of the SDF, Mazloum Abdî, denied any involvement by his forces in the Ankara attack.

As of January 2024, Turkey conducted three intensive campaigns using warplanes and drones, including over 200 airstrikes on more than 150 different locations. These strikes targeted infrastructure and critical facilities, such as power stations, oil and gas fields, in addition to small factories and firms. Critical installations were repeatedly targeted, even after maintenance, during these three campaigns that claimed the lives of at least 20



civilians (including three women) and injured more than 70 (including nine women and five children).

<u>The first campaign</u> began on October 5, 2023, and lasted for few days. Turkish planes targeted more than 150 critical sites in northeast Syria, including power transfer stations in major towns and cities, rendering them out of service, in addition to energy installations, the most important of which was the Sweidiya Power Plant, which supplies gas and electricity to Al-Jazira Region/al-Hasakah Governorate. The Turkish attacks resulted in the death of 11 civilians, including two children, and the injury of more than 10 others, including a girl who lost her both legs. Moreover, millions of residents were deprived access to water and electricity for weeks.

The little girl, Farah [in English joy], whose name brought her no joy, was one of the victims of the Turkish airstrikes. She lost both her legs and can no longer walk or play. On October 9, 2023, a Turkish bombardment targeted al-Beshiriya Village in the countryside of al-Dirbasiyah. Farah, her mother and three other female workers were injured while they were working in harvesting cotton to support their families. On the same day, two children (a boy and a girl) were killed due to a Turkish shelling on Ayn Issa Town in Raqqa countryside.



Image of the little girl, Farah, who lost both her legs due to a Turkish airstrike that targeted a group of women harvesting cotton in the al-Dirbasiyah countryside, on October 9, 2023. Farah was with her mother, who was also injured along with three other female workers.



In a report published on October 26, 2023, titled "Northeast Syria: Turkish Strikes Disrupt Water, Electricity", Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated, "Turkish drone strikes on Kurdishheld areas of northeast Syria damaged critical infrastructure and resulted in water and electricity disruptions for millions of people."

On December 24, 2023 and as Christmas and New Year celebrations began, Turkey started the <u>second campaign</u> of airstrikes on northeast Syria, using warplanes and drones. The campaign resulted in the destruction of around 50 critical sites, including an oil station near Al-Kahef/Bana Shikfatiyah Village in Derik/Al-Malikiyah, and the Awda and Al-Saeeda Oil Fields in the countryside of Qamishli. The bombardments rendered these stations inoperable, depriving more than one million residents of electricity due to the halt in gas supplies provided by these facilities.

The Turkish Army continued its assaults the following day, corresponding December 25, 2023, with drones targeting factories, service facilities and civilian sites in Kobani/Ayn al-Arab, Amuda, Qamishli, and Derik/Al-Malikiyah. Among the targeted sites were a medical facility, an olive oil factory, a sewing workshop, livestock feed facilities, a cement plant, a wedding hall, and the only oxygen cylinder manufacturing laboratory in the region. The most severe attack was carried out against a printing press, resulting in the death of four employees, including a young woman.

The Turkish Ministry of Defense acknowledged the responsibility for these strikes in an <u>official statement</u>, confirming the deliberate intent behind these targeted attacks, in which nine civilians were killed, including two young women, and 14 others were injured. The strikes spread panic among the local population.

It is noteworthy that for the first time Turkey <u>targeted</u> US-supported service facilitates, including the <u>medical-grade oxygen bottling plant</u> and a <u>power station in al-Dirbasiyah</u>. Both were supported by the <u>United States Agency for International Development</u> (USAID) and were rendered completely out of service.<sup>1</sup>

The medical-grade oxygen bottling plant was opened in Qamishli in 2022, <u>funded</u> by the USAID's Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities in Conflict (BRICC) Program. Today, the plant is demolished completely and the burnt and destroyed equipment still bears labels reading "USAID- from the American People".

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For more, please read: <u>Turkey Targets USAID Projects in Northeast Syria</u>, published on April 27, 2024, by the Kurdish Peace Institute (KPI).





An image of the destroyed Qamishli-based oxygen bottling plant, taken on March 10, 2024, by **Meghan Bodette**, Director of Research at the Kurdish Peace Institute (KPI). The photo was published in a report titled

"Turkey Targets USAID Projects in Northeast Syria". Photo Source: KPI

The power station in al-Dirbasiyah, which was <u>rehabilitated</u> under USAID support in 2022, provided electricity to approximately 7,000 households in al-Dirbasiyah and about 200 nearby villages. It was also the primary power supplier for the vital <u>Allouk Water Station</u>, the main source for drinking water to more than 600,000 people in al-Hasakah Governorate. It is worth mentioning that Allouk Water Station lies in the territories occupied by Turkey following its military operation "Peace Spring" in October 2019. Since then, Turkey has repeatedly suspended the station's work, causing a devastating water-related crisis in al-Hasakah and its associated refugee camps.





An image of al-Dirbasiyah Power Plant, published on February 4, 2022, by USAID, announcing the rehabilitation of the plant and doubling its electricity generation capacity from 10 to 20 megawatts. The aim was to provide energy for vital installations, such as drinking water pumping stations, irrigation canals, clinics and hospitals, and public institutions, in addition to Allouk Water Station, the main source for drinking water for the al-Hasakah Governorate. Photo Source: USAID

At the beginning of 2024, northeast Syria experienced a <u>third campaign</u> of intense Turkish strikes. Starting on January 14, 2024, warplanes and drones targeted approximately 74 critical sites, including oil and energy installations previously struck in earlier campaigns, such as al-Sweidiya plant that produces gas and electricity. The plant was struck at least ten times and was rendered completely out of service, depriving millions of residents of home gas cylinders, and cutting off electricity from hundreds of villages and several towns and cities. This disruption also affected the operation of water stations and other energy-dependent service facilities. The campaign resulted in injuries to at least nine civilians, including two children and a pregnant woman.







Images showing fires in a power transfer station in Kobani City after it was targeted by a Turkish drone in mid-January 2024. Photos Source: <u>North Press Agency</u>

The advance in the scale of Turkish aggressions on areas in northeast Syria indicates Turkey's intention to destroy the region's economy and deprive the residents from their basic rights and services. According to statements of officials in the Autonomous Administration, damage to infrastructure caused by Turkish attacks are estimated millions of dollars. A <u>report</u>- citing officials in the oil sector- stated that losses are estimated to exceed one billion dollars, This figure includes the costs of repairing damages, as well as losses from oil revenues and other related impacts.



In a <u>report</u> published on February 9, 2024, <u>HRW</u> confirmed that, "Damage to medical facilities targeted in December has disrupted the oxygen supply to more than a dozen private and public hospitals, and strikes on 28 health facilities have disrupted their services, increasing the risk of water-borne diseases."

Synergy Association for Victims endorsed two joint statements condemning Turkish assaults on infrastructure and civilian installations in northeast Syria. The <u>first statement</u>, signed by 151 Syrian organizations, was published on October 8, 2023, while the <u>second statement</u>, signed by 158 Syrian organizations and was published on December 27, 2023. The two statements called on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the European Union (EU) and the US to promptly intervene to protect civilians and stop the deliberate attacks on infrastructure ad public facilities, and to take actions to protect civilians, their livelihoods, as well as to cease the targeting of vital installations necessary for the survival of the population.

Furthermore, the NES NGO Forum, a coalition of international organizations operating in the region, issued a <u>statement</u> on January 16, 2024, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities in northeast Syria, and for the international community to negotiate for a political solution and end the repeated attacks on vital civilian infrastructure. The statement read, "The humanitarian response cannot sustain the level of damages increasing with each escalation of hostilities. It is imperative that these attacks are condemned, critical infrastructure repaired and civilian lives protected. Investments made into NES and the humanitarian response are being repeatedly undermined and the safety of both civilians and humanitarian actors is increasingly at risk."

on January 29, 2024, the NES NGO Forum issued another <u>statement</u>, concerning Turkish attacks on northeast Syria. The statement indicated that electricity has been cut off for one million people in cities and villages, and over 1.4 million people have very limited access to safe drinking water. Additionally, it added that damage to medical facilities targeted in December 2023 has disrupted the oxygen supply to more than a dozen private and public hospitals, and that strikes have disrupted activities in 38 health facilities, increasing the risks of <u>water-borne diseases</u>. Furthermore, it warned that "the scale of damage far supersedes the humanitarian community's capacity to sustain emergency life-saving service provision."

In statement published on March 11,2024, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) reported that, "Turkish aerial attacks on power plants deprived nearly one million people of water and electricity for weeks, in violation of international humanitarian law. Civilians were also killed in targeted aerial attacks fitting a pattern of Turkish drone strikes. Such attacks may amount to war crimes.



# **Legal Liabilities and Recommendations:**

The Turkish government carried out deliberate and declared attacks on civilian objects and critical infrastructure in northeast Syria, constituting a violation of customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The principles of IHL and the IHRL mandate the protection of civilian lives, properties, and infrastructure.

IHL establishes fundamental standards that warring parties must adhere to during armed conflicts to protect civilians and civilian objects. The Turkish attacks on northeast Syria, as outlined in the report, violate several key principles of IHL, including:<sup>2</sup>

# The Principle of Distinction:

This principle states the necessity to distinguish between civilian and military targets. Attacks against critical infrastructure, such as power plants, oil and gas installations, and health facilities are clear violation of the principle of distinction, as they inflict damage to civilians and disrupt basic services the civilians rely on.

# The Principle of Proportionality:

This Principle, under IHL, prohibits launching attacks on legitimate military targets which may be expected to cause incidental civilian casualties, harm to civilians, or damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof. This is considered excessive when compared to the anticipated concrete and direct military advantage. Additionally, the principle of precautions must be applied concurrently with the principle of proportionality, as well as independently of it. In other words, even if the expected incidental civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects are not deemed excessive relative to the anticipated military advantage, the attacking party must still take all feasible measures to minimize incidental harm to civilians.

Turkish attacks have resulted in significant civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure, causing severe hardship for civilians (such as power and water outages). Therefore, the Turkish government's attacks on northeast Syria have not adhered to the principle of proportionality under IHL.<sup>3</sup>

Article 51 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions prohibits attacks that do not distinguish between civilian and military targets. It considers indiscriminate attacks that result in civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure as a clear violation of this prohibition.<sup>4</sup>

Under International Human Rights Law (IHRL), states are obligated to protect fundamental human rights even during armed conflict. These rights include:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IHL, Customary IHL.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Article 51 (5) (b) First Additional Protocol, and Rule (14) of the Customary International Humanitarian Law.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> ICRC, additional protocol (1) to the Geneva Conventions, article 51.



### ■ The Right to Life:

Article (6) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that every person has the inherent right to life, which must be protected by stated. Turkish attacks that have claimed the lives of civilians, including women and children, are considered violations of this right.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Right to Health:

This right includes ensuring that individuals enjoy access to basic health care. Attacks on health facilities that disrupt medical services are considered violation of this right. Additionally, the interruption of clean water supplies increases the risk of disease spread, posing an additional threat to public health.<sup>6</sup>

# The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living:

This right includes access to essential services, such as water and electricity. Turkish attacks targeting infrastructure necessary for providing these services directly violate this right.

In all circumstances, the Turkish government must immediately cease attacks on civilians, infrastructure, and critical facilities, and respect the IHL. Moreover, it should initiate an impartial and thorough investigation into any civilian casualties resulting from its operations, and adhere to the standards and obligations outlined in the IHRL and the IHL. These obligations include:

- Protection of civilians: Turkey must take all possible measures to protect civilians and civilian objects during military operations and avoid attacks that may cause disproportionate or indiscriminate harm.
- Ensuring access to humanitarian assistance Turkey must permit unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians affected by the conflict and ensure that relief operations are not hindered by military actions.
- Responsibility for illegal actions: under international law, Turkey is responsible for any violations committed by its military armed forces, and it must hold accountable the perpetrators of these violations.
- Compensation for damages: Turkey must provide appropriate compensations to civilian victims affected by illegal attacks, including repairing the damages inflicted to critical infrastructure.

The evidence and documented facts in this report demonstrate Turkey's violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law through deliberate attacks on civilian objects and critical infrastructure in northeast Syria. The international community must take concrete actions to ensure Turkey is held accountable for these violations and to guarantee the protection of civilians in the affected areas.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), article 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, article 12.



# Methodology:

This report aims to document the recurrent Turkish attacks on northeast Syria, based on a comprehensive analysis of data collected by our field researchers from January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024. The report assesses the impact of these attacks on civilians using multiple sources, including testimonies from witnesses, victims, survivors, and their families.

To prepare this report, Synergy collected 20 testimonies from survivors, families of civilian victims, and eyewitnesses on the Turkish attacks. These testimonies include direct accounts of the incidents and their aftermath on individuals and local communities. We are aware of the bulk of our responsibility towards the victims, and we rely, in our work, on strategies that focus on experiences, perspectives and priorities of the victims, survivors, and their families as a core part of our daily work. We are committed to including multiple perspectives to develop and analytical in-depth understanding of events, with a commitment to the highest levels of accuracy and integrity.

In addition to the interviews, a wide variety of open sources addressing information about the Turkish attacks on northeast Syria were reviewed and analyzed. The accuracy of the information included in these sources was verified and used as a supporting reference for our analysis.

While collecting and analyzing data, we adhered to the highest standards of accuracy and integrity to ensure the reliability of the information presented in the report. All information was verified by cross-checking/referencing with multiple sources and ensuring its consistency with the testimonies and statements we collected.

This comprehensive and integrated methodology is essential for providing a clear detailed picture of Turkish attacks' impacts on civilians and infrastructure in northeast Syria and for raising international awareness of these violations.

#### **On-the-Ground Testimonies:**

The stories of pain and suffering recure with every Turkish raid on areas in northeast Syria. These stories, documented by Synergy, are not just figures included in human rights reports; they are rather real accounts that clearly illustrate the atrocities occurring in conflict areas, where civilians pay a heavy price due to repeated attacks that violate IHL and IHRL.

#### From Rescue to Victimization

"Abu George" and "Lawand Hasan" are two men who survived the Turkish bombardment on areas in northeast Syria. Both were injured on the same day, but in two separate incidents while attempting to rescue other victims in a series of consecutive Turkish attacks. In this regard, Synergy spoke to their families and documented their testimonies. Abu George's brother said:



"On February 28, 2024, Abu George was driving away from his village Khana Serê/Khan al-Gabal, located on the road to Derik when villagers requested his help to assist a severely injured person- whose identity was unknown and been severely injured inside a car (Jeeb) that had been hit by a Turkish drone strike."

Without any hesitation, Abu George and his companion "Jager" set off towards Derik/al-Malikiyah City to transfer the injured man to the hospital. However, their vehicle came under another attack of the same kind:

"Abu George's car was targeted by a Turkish drone near <u>Wanik</u> Village, causing minor injuries to him, while his friend Jager suffered ruptured eardrums due to the intensity of the explosion. Meanwhile the injured man was bleeding and was in a very critical condition."

At the same time, Lawand Hasan, a father of five, was on the way to his own marble and tile manufacturing factory, located in Girkê Legê/Ma'bada Town, when he came across Abu George's car that had been targeted. Instantly, Hasan stopped to rescue the injured persons. Hasan's relatives narrated the details, saying:

"Lawand Hasan transferred the seriously-injured man to Derik City, whereas both Abu George and Jager preferred to wait for their relatives as their conditions were not as severe. However, at the entrance of Derik City, Hasan's car was targeted with a Turkish drone, resulting in severe injuries to him, including the loss of his right eye due to retinal damage, as well as shrapnel wounds to his head and body."

Synergy was unable to verify the identity or fate of the person injured in the first Turkish airstrike, or whether he was a civilian or a military man. Nevertheless, the second and third attacks obviously targeted civilian persons (Abu George, Jager, and Lawand Hasan) during their attempt to rescue the injured man. This conduct constitutes a flagrant violation of IHL principles that state the protection of civilians and civilian objects. Targeting civilians who attempt to rescue injured persons is considered a double attack that violates the principle of distinction and increases the unjustified civilians' suffering.

Lawand finds it difficult to recover from the trauma and return to his normal life again, as he is haunted by images of the shrapnel and the terrifying moments that deprived him of sight in one eye. Doctors say he requires a long course of treatment. On the other hand, the Turkish attack has left deep psychological and physical scars on both Abu George and Jager, who experience persistent feelings of fear and anxiety.





Image of Lawand Hasan's car after it was struck at the entrance of Derik/al-Malikiyah City on February 28, 2024. Photo Source: the victim's family



Image of Abu George's car after it was struck near the city of Derik/al-Malikiyah City on February 28, 2024.

Photo Source: the victim's family

## My Body Covered with Shrapnel:

On January 15, 2024, multiple areas in northeast Syria were subjected to intensive drones and warplanes attacks, targeting both critical installations and civilian objects.

Kaprin al-Farho, 32, an employee in an electricity corporation in <u>al-Dirbasiyah</u>, had headed to work as usual when he learned that the city's power station had been hit by a Turkish drone strike. Without hesitation, he and a colleague went to the site to check on their other colleagues and help extinguish the fire. Kaprin recounted to Synergy what happened after he arrived at the bombing site:



"Ten minutes after we arrived, the plant was targeted again. I sustained shrapnel injuries throughout my body and was taken to Khabbat Hospital in the city. After receiving initial treatment, I was transferred to another hospital in the city and then to hospitals in al-Hasakah."

Doctors have said that Kaprin's body contained 18 pieces of shrapnel. While some have been removed, they informed him that several other fragments lodged in his abdominal wall would be removed at a later time. "Now I live with memories of the bombing and carry shrapnel in my body from its effects," Kaprin said.

Kaprin's life has changed ever since; Memories of shelling and shrapnel have become a part of his daily life, constantly reminding him of the harrowing moments he endured, and the sacrifices civilians make amid ongoing conflict.

Turkey employs a strategy of conducting double and successive airstrikes by repeatedly bombing the same location, putting rescuers and humanitarian workers at risk and causing maximum damage to the facility. Repeated strikes on the same site constitute a flagrant violation of the Principle of Protection enshrined in the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions.



Image of the witness Kaprin al-Farho, who was injured while at work on January 15, 2024, due to Turkish double airstrike against a power station in al-Dirbasiyah. Photo source: the witness himself



#### Joy Disrupted by Shelling:

On April 26, 2024, the family of the 11-year-old girl, Lojayn Disho, was present in an engagement party of a relative in Awn al-Dadat Village, northern Manbij. The occasion was filled with joy and hope, with Lojayn accompanying her elderly grandmother to assist with some tasks.

Amid the celebration atmosphere, two mortar shells fired by factions the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) suddenly dropped on the village. The attack resulted in the grandmother losing her hearing for several hours, while Lojayn was there shivering from panic. It was only after two hours that they realized she had been injured by shrapnel.

Lojayn was soon taken to the "Specialized Hospital" in Manbij. Medical examinations revealed that shrapnel had hit her abdomen, necessitating an urgent surgical operation to remove a 25 cm segment of her intestines, according to the hospital report. Wa'ad Disho, a relative of Lojayn, spoke to Synergy saying:

"Lojayn was at a family gathering meant for joy, but what happened? She was injured by shrapnel from a mortar shell and had a part of her intestines removed. She remembers the incident every time and trembles with fear. During her treatment at the hospital, they had difficulty examining her wound due to her young age and constant fear."

Lojayn's story highlights the devastating impacts of indiscriminate attacks on civilians, particularly children. The use of mortar shells in predominantly civilian areas constitutes a grave violation of the IHL, which mandates the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. All parties to the conflict must respect the IHL to ensure the protection of innocents and spare them the woes of war.



Image of the 11-year-old girl, Lojayn Disho, in the "Specialized Hospital" in Manbij City, on April 26, 2024. She sustained shrapnel in the abdomen as a result of shelling carried out by the opposition SNA on a betrothal party in Awn al-Dadat Village, northern Manbij. Photo Source: the girl's family

#### Death Shadows Us:

Ali, 17-year-old boy, lived a simple life filled with challenges since he was a kid. He experienced displacement and endured poverty. Ali was not old enough to overcome these difficulties until his life ended tragically due to a Turkish bombardment.

It all started in the wake of the Turkish military operation "Olive Branch", during which 11-year-old Ali Abdurrahman was forcibly displaced from Afrin. Turkish forces occupied the city, aided by the SNA factions, compelling Ali and his family to move to <u>Tal Rifaat</u> Town, northern Aleppo, in search of safety.

At 17, as Ali and his family struggled with dire living conditions, Ali had to work in construction and excavation in the village of Beloniya. However, a Turkish drone hit the village on March 17, 2024, causing serious injuries to Ali and wounding his 30-year-old coworker with shrapnel all over his body.

Zakariya, 27, Ali's eldest brother, spoke to Synergy. He said:

"My brother had to work due to our poor economic situation. Unfortunately, just one week into his job, he was injured in a Turkish drone strike. He was taken to the



Tal Rifaat hospital along with his injured co-worker, and then both were transferred to Fafin Hospital in al-Shahbaa. His co-worker survived after shrapnel was removed from his body and a metal rod was inserted into his leg. However, my brother's injuries were severe, affecting his head, chest, and back. He passed away in the hospital just two hours after the attack."

Zakariya concluded, "My brother's life was very simple. He was young, experienced displacement, and he didn't live long enough to grow up before dying in the bombing."



Image of the child Ali Abdurrahman, 17, who was killed as a result of a Turkish drone attack on Beloniya Village in Tal Rifaat Town, on April 17, 2024. Photo Source: the victim's brother