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1. Acknowledgements

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2. Executive Summary

A. Scope

This report documents the reasons why Syrians fled their country, from March 2011 through to July 2013, the date of completion of the interviews which form the basis of this report. The report examines the reasons for Syrians’ displacement from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective, documenting the types and levels of harm suffered by respondents, and, where possible, the perpetrator groups responsible. It also analyzes the incidents reported based on applicable international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

The results of this study tell a compelling story. The data represents a snapshot of experiences from 10 governorates in Syria and identifies patterns in what has happened to a sample group of Syrians who fled to Jordan and Lebanon, registered with humanitarian aid organizations when they arrived, and were able to be contacted when we conducted the survey. Importantly, the respondents in this study were selected under a two-tiered randomization process whereby the respondent’s household was selected randomly and then the respondent was selected randomly from within the household in order to enhance the credibility, diversity, and objectivity of the dataset.

The findings in this report are broadly consistent with what has been reported by human rights groups and the media working inside Syria and in neighboring countries. The resulting dataset contributes to the growing body of evidence that Syrian Government Forces are targeting civilian populations and violating human rights and humanitarian laws, and in some cases, committing acts that may rise to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity. First-hand testimonies and quantitative data also point to abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, including the conduct of military operations in disregard for civilians.

B. Population Size and Characteristics of Respondents

The report’s findings are based on a survey of 884 household representatives. 812 of these interviews were conducted using the sampling methodology described in this report. All quantitative analysis in the report is drawn from this 812 member survey population, though this report also contains qualitative analysis based on the full survey of 884 respondents. The sample population respondents’ ages ranged from 18-93, with a median of age 34 and a mean of age 37. The population was roughly divided between male and female. The vast majority of respondents identified themselves as Arab (86.8%) and Sunni Muslim (89.8%). 65.0% of the sample population was located in Jordan and 34.9% was in Lebanon.
C. Methodology

- ABA ROLI compiled a sampling frame of 14,000 Syrian refugees, based on registries from local NGOs and other service providers in Jordan and Lebanon. ABA ROLI used stratified, systematic sampling to select households, and conducted interviews with one adult in each household (the “respondent”), also selected randomly.

- Each respondent was interviewed using a questionnaire that contained a series of open-ended questions aimed at documenting events that he or she witnessed or were experienced in his or her household since the start of the civil war in Syria in March 2011.

- Data was used to document harms experienced and witnessed where there were “reasonable grounds to believe that incidents occurred as described.” However, documentation of respondents’ general perceptions and reasons for leaving were not required to meet that standard for inclusion in the report.

- The events that we measured (attacks on individuals, households, and communities) affected the households of the 812 member sample population: a total of 5,602 people. Although it is not representative of all of the approximately 22.5 million Syrians affected by this conflict, the population interviewed was not small or isolated: respondents came from 10 different governorates and represented multiple religious and ethnic groups. It can therefore be said with confidence that the data corroborates other stories of atrocities that have happened inside Syria.

D. Analysis of Survey Results

The survey analysis is divided between Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups (primarily identified as, inter alia, Syrian Arab Army, Syrian Arab Air Forces, Syrian Security and Intelligence Agencies, and Shabiha) and Anti-Regime Armed Groups (primarily identified as Free Syrian Army and Jabhat Al-Nusra). The survey population attributed 19.9 times more incidents of harm to Syrian Government Forces for every incident of harm attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups. The following is a qualitative and quantitative overview of the incidents reported by respondents regarding these perpetrators.

i. Violations by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups

Respondent accounts of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, willful killings, home raids, sexual harassment and looting committed by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups point to targeted and systematic violations against civilian populations of Syria’s obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. Further, respondent accounts indicate that Syrian Government Forces failed to distinguish between civilian and military objects and between civilians and combatants in violation of customary international law in launching attacks on densely populated areas, including by aerial bombardment. Such attacks reportedly resulted in civilian deaths and extensive damage and destruction of civilian objects and protected property.
a. **Arbitrary Arrest and Detention**

- Respondents reported 350 incidents, wherein either they or a member of their household was arrested by Syrian Government Forces, or wherein the respondent witnessed civilians being taken by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups under circumstances that would constitute arbitrary arrest. The highest incidents were reported in Damascus: 30, Homs: 129, and Dar’a: 116. Many of the incident reports involved the arrest of multiple persons.

- Reasons for arrest included: having the same name as a wanted individual; being related to a wanted individual; the provision of medical assistance to opposition fighters and civilians in opposition areas; the use of the internet to support the uprising, as well as other forms of non-violent resistance; and leaving home while under curfew to obtain essential provisions.

- Among the due process violations were the following violations: no respondent reported that he or she was presented with an arrest warrant upon detention, and most respondents were not informed of the reason for their arrest until a later stage in the detention process.

b. **Torture and Cruel Treatment**

- Torture was likely under-reported in this study. Nonetheless, of the 96 incidents in which a respondent or a member of their household was detained by Syrian Government Forces, there were 92 reported incidents of torture while in custody, i.e., more than 1 in 9 randomly selected households reported that a member of their household had been detained and tortured. Of those 92 incidents, 39 incidents were reported to have occurred in Homs and 42 in Dar’a.

- Respondents gave consistent accounts of the torture methods used on detainees, which typically included: electric shocks; suspension for extended periods; isolation for extended periods; severe beatings; deprivation of food and drink; removing fingernails using pliers; cutting off detainees’ limbs or fingers; and burning of detainees.

- Respondents also reported cruel and degrading treatment in detention, including physical and psychological abuse by prison guards, extreme overcrowding, and unhygienic conditions.

c. **Willful or Arbitrary Killings**

- Respondents reported 59 incidents of arbitrary or willful killing of members of their own household by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. Homs and Dar’a had the highest reported incidents, with 25 incidents reported in Homs and 22 in Dar’a. Respondents reported witnessing a further 299 incidents involving killings of persons not from the respondent’s household. These incidents frequently involved multiple victims.

- Respondents reported killings of persons *hors de combat* in a range of contexts. The most commonly reported contexts were: executions; armed attacks on demonstrators; sniper attacks; deaths occurring while in custody; and bombardment,
d. Beatings and Threats of Violence

- Respondents reported 101 incidents of beating to themselves or a member of their own household. Respondents also reported witnessing 116 incidents of beatings of persons not of the same household. Respondents reported the highest number of incidents in Homs (97) and Dar’a (68). Many of the reported incidents involved beatings of multiple persons. Beatings may be under-reported because they were often overlooked by respondents as a distinct category of harm.

- 118 respondents reported threats of violence by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups as a reason for leaving and a further 33 reported threats of violence in the context of harms to a person in their household. Sexual threats were separately reported – 21 respondents reported sexual threats to themselves or a member of their household – and are discussed below.

e. Home Raids

- Although it cannot be said based solely on respondent accounts that home raids were perpetrated as a means of intimidation aimed at forcing civilians from their homes, they appear to have had that effect. 497 respondents reported the occurrence or fear of home raids as a reason for leaving Syria. Multiple raids were often reported by one respondent, and it is believed that home raids may have been under-reported.

- Respondents reported 140 incidents of home raids related to a personal harm such as a beating, the arrest of a family member, or other trauma. 17 incidents of home raids lead to a loss or destruction of personal property.

- Respondents reported a range of abuses during home raids, including beatings, psychological intimidation, sexual intimidation of women and girls, theft, and the destruction of property. Respondents also reported that their children experienced severe trauma as a result of raids.

f. Bombardment of Civilian Objects

- Respondent accounts indicate that Syrian Government Forces failed to distinguish between civilian and military objects and between civilians and combatants in violation of customary international law. Respondents consistently indicated that entire neighborhoods, villages, and towns were bombarded by Syrian Government Forces.

- The presence of Anti-Regime Armed Groups in some densely populated areas was also reported but it does not remove the duty to protect civilian persons and objects and to distinguish military objectives from the entire rest of a neighborhood, village, or town.

- Respondents reported 52 incidents of aerial bombardment resulting in harm to a person or persons. Respondents also reported that other forms of bombardment resulted in 50 additional
incidents of harm. An “incident” in this context typically referred to a period of bombardment, not a single event.

- Respondents reported 21 incidents of aerial bombardment resulting in damage and destruction to their own homes, businesses, or personal property, and they reported 53 incidents of property loss or damage as a result of other forms of bombardment by Syrian Government Forces.

  g. Destruction and Theft of Property

- Respondents reported 283 events in which their home was damaged or destroyed by an attack which could reasonably be attributed to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups.

- Respondents also attributed to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups 29 incidents of damage or destruction of businesses, with 16 of these incidents reported in Homs and 8 reported in Dar’a; 69 incidents of destruction of property or food stores; and 163 incidents of theft of property, with 76 incidents in Homs and 55 incidents in Dar’a.

- Many additional responses provided by respondents regarding the loss of property could not reasonably be attributed to a specific party.

  h. Children: Deliberate Targeting and the Failure to Protect

- Children have not been spared from harm. Although our survey did not include interviews with children, respondents’ witnessed accounts make clear that children in Syria have been directly targeted by Syrian Government Forces in acts of killing, detention, beating, intimidation, and interrogation.

- Children have also suffered heavily as victims of bombardments on civilian areas.

  ii. Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups

  a. Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives

- Overall, reports by respondents indicate that the positioning of military objectives in certain populated areas exposed the civilian population to a heightened risk of harm and contributed to conditions that led to the displacement of thousands. Positioning of military objectives in civilian areas violates customary international law.

- Many respondents also reported that Anti-Regime Armed Groups forcibly occupied homes and used residential buildings to shield themselves from bombardment. The latter practice arguably constituted the use of human shields.

- Many civilian injuries and deaths were reported as a result of fighting between both sides, and as a result of Syrian Government Forces’ bombardment of populated areas where Anti-Regime Armed Groups positioned military objectives.
b. Killing of Civilians

- Respondents reported 14 incidents of killings of civilians which could be attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups based on first-hand or same household accounts; four of these incidents occurred in Homs.

- Many respondents attributed bombardment of residential areas, and resulting civilian deaths, to Anti-Regime Armed Groups. However, respondent accounts of the source of rocket attacks could rarely be relied on and so specific responsibility for deaths by non-aerial bombardment was difficult to quantify.

c. Abductions and Related Abuses

- Respondents reported five instances wherein a member of their household was abducted by a member of an Anti-Regime Armed Group or wherein the respondent witnessed the abduction(s). As noted below, at least one of the reported abductions involved multiple abductees.

d. Other Human Rights Abuses

- First-hand reports of unauthorized searches and home raids, as well as theft and intimidation, point to unlawful acts committed by Anti-Regime Armed Groups as they asserted control over civilian areas.

iii. Foreigners

Respondents frequently reported incidents involving non-Syrians acting in concert with Syrian Government Forces or as members of Anti-Regime Armed Groups. Non-Syrians, identified as such by their use of a foreign language or a different Arabic dialect, and commonly believed to be Iranian or Lebanese, were reported as participating in home raids with Syrian Government Forces. Non-Syrians were also implicated alongside Syrian Government Forces in reports of sexual harassment, interrogations while in arbitrary detention, and attacks on demonstrators.

iv. Unattributed Incidents

The perpetrator of a large number of incidents was recorded as “unknown,” including 116 unattributed ground-launched and rocket attacks; 32 accounts of injury or death by shooting; accounts of missing persons; reports of destroyed housing and personal property; and kidnappings for ransom by criminal gangs.

v. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

First-hand and same-household accounts of Sexual and Gender Based Violence [hereinafter SGBV] centered on reports of sexual harassment during home raids by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. There were no same-household accounts of rape yet respondents overwhelmingly reported having fled Syria due to fear of rape being perpetrated against female members of their households,
whether by Syrian Government Forces, Anti-Regime Armed Groups, or other actors (with the latter linked to lawlessness in areas respondents fled from). Obstacles to the reporting of SGBV in this study mean that it is probable that SGBV was under-reported.

vi. Other Reasons for Displacement

Although not quantified for the purposes of our study, multiple respondents also cited the following reasons for leaving: kidnappings for ransom and other general crime and an absence of law and order; the lack of goods and services, including medical services; and the lack of a livelihood.

vii. Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup

Quantitative survey data was studied by religion and ethnicity, and respondent narratives were also studied with reference to religion (Christian or Sunni), ethnicity (Arab or Palestinian or Syriac/Assyrian), and the geographic location of the respondent’s residence in Syria. Analysis of the reported harms suggests that there are correlations between the harms suffered by the household, the perpetrator, and the religion and ethnicity of the household.

viii. Analysis of Harms by Governorate

The report contains a brief analysis of the patterns of harms and perpetrators recorded for the three governorates from which the majority of respondents were drawn from: Damascus, Dar’a and Homs.

ix. Post-Conflict Redress

At the end of the survey, all respondents were asked to express their thoughts as to whether they would seek redress for the harms suffered. Respondents expressed a range of views, expressing anger and a desire for retribution against the parties they deemed responsible for the conflict; expressing hopes for (or a lack of hope in) a just resolution, peace, and repatriation. Respondents’ views provide some initial guidance as to the effect of the conflict on the willingness of refugees to return and live with other communities, as well as their potential responsiveness to transitional justice initiatives.
3. Background

A. Geography and Demographics

The Syrian Arab Republic [hereinafter Syria] occupies an area of 185,180 square kilometers. It borders Turkey to the north, Israel to the South, Iraq and Jordan to the west, and Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea to the east. Syria’s population of approximately 22.5 million is spread across 13 governorates. Aleppo is Syria’s largest city, with a population approaching three million. Syria’s capital, Damascus, is the country’s second largest city (with a population of approximately 2.5 million) and Homs is Syria’s third city (with a population approximately 1.28 million). Approximately 45% of Syrians live in rural areas. More than 50% of Syria’s population is under 24 years of age. According to a World Bank estimate from 2010, 83% of all Syrians are literate.

Ethnically, Syria is 90.3% Arab. Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Syria and make up 9%. More than half the Kurdish population lives in the northern and northeastern governorates in areas bordering Turkey and Iraq, largely in Hasakah, Raqqa, and Aleppo. Other ethnic minorities include Armenians, Syriacs, Assyrians, and Turkmens.

Islam is the official religion of the state, and 74% of the population is Sunni Muslim. Religious minorities principally include Alawite (11%), Shiite (2%), Christian (10% or less due to recent high levels of migration), Druze (3%). Christians in Syria predominantly reside in and around the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Latakia, as well as in the Hasakah Governorate. The majority of Alawites live in the mountainous areas of the Latakia Governorate, as well as the cities of Latakia, Tartus, Homs, and Damascus. The Druze population is mostly concentrated in the Jabal Al-Arab region in the southern Governorate of Suweida, making up the majority of Suweida’s population. Syria’s population also includes more than 486,000 registered Palestinian refugees. They predominantly reside in nine official and three unofficial camps in Syria’s eastern governorates.

B. Political and Military Context

Bashar Al-Assad [hereinafter Assad] came to power upon the death of his father, Hafez Al-Assad, in 2000. At that time, many anticipated political opening and progressive change. Hundreds of political prisoners were released in the early months of Assad’s rule, but soon Assad largely reverted to his father’s policies, overseen through a network of military, security, and intelligence structures led by family members and regime loyalists. Syria’s Kurdish population, long the subject of political and cultural isolation, was targeted after large-scale demonstrations in March 2004. Calls for reform did not yield results. Article 8 of the Syrian Constitution of 1973, which enshrined Assad’s Ba’ath Party as “the leading party in the society and the state,” was not amended, and the official ban on opposition groups continued.

Strict adherence to a secular system of government has long been seen as a mechanism for protecting Syria’s religious minorities, including Alawites (the sect to which the Assad family belongs), Christians, and Druze; arguably, this ensured the Assad government a degree of popular support from these various
communities. Similarly, Syria’s business elite, across all sects, profited from close relations with the regime, the stability of a single party system, and, in the last decade, liberal economic reforms.

By 2011, the military consisted of air, ground, and naval forces. Active personnel were estimated at 295,000, with an additional 314,000 in reserves. The majority of the Syrian military, including the majority of conscripts and air force pilots, were Sunni, but most of the military leadership was made up of Alawites. The military’s most elite divisions, the Republican Guard and the Fourth Mechanized Division, commanded by Assad’s brother, are exclusively Alawite. Due to the Alawite composition of the military leadership, its interests are closely aligned with those of the Assad family.

Calls for reform in Syria began in February 2011, spurred by pro-democracy protests in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. The following month, several children were arrested in the city of Dar’a on the grounds of writing anti-government graffiti; the arrests led to anti-regime protests in several cities around the country. On March 24, 2011, Syrian Security opened fire on demonstrators in Dar’a, resulting in multiple deaths.\textsuperscript{11} As protests grew and the government’s military response escalated, the Syrian President placed blame on a foreign conspiracy allegedly seeking to destabilize the country. At the same time, he took a series of political steps, including the firing of his cabinet and minor concessions towards conservative Muslim groups. In April, soldiers and tanks were deployed to quell protests in Baniyas and Homs. Later that month, Syria’s longstanding emergency law was lifted. On May 30, 2011, protests gathered momentum, as images were published evidencing the torture of a 13-year-old boy who died in police custody. In June of that year, 120 soldiers were killed in the northern city of Jisr Al-Shughur. The government blamed armed gangs, while members of the opposition claimed that the soldiers were executed for refusing to fire on protesters.\textsuperscript{12} From early in the uprising, Shabiha participated in attacks on protesters.

On July 29, 2011, amidst escalating popular protests and an ongoing government crackdown, the Free Syrian Army [hereinafter FSA] was formed by a collaboration among rebel fighters and defectors from the Syrian Arab Army [hereinafter Syrian Army or SAA]. A collection of independent units, the FSA does not operate under a unified command. In September 2011, a four-day conference in Istanbul led to the formation of the Syrian National Council [hereinafter SNC], a coalition of Syrian opposition groups. Shortly thereafter, large-scale battles commenced between government forces and the armed opposition.

As violence against protesters escalated, the United States [hereinafter US] and European Union [hereinafter EU] imposed sanctions on Assad and other senior government officials. The EU also imposed an arms embargo on Syria. In August 2011, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the US called for Assad to step down, while the Arab League condemned the government crackdown and called for an end to violence.\textsuperscript{13} In the same month, Amnesty International reported a high number of suspicious deaths in custody and accused the Syrian government of crimes against humanity.\textsuperscript{14} The United Nations’ [hereinafter UN] action on Syria stalled due to the absence of consensus within the UN Security Council [hereinafter UNSC]. On August 3, 2011, the UNSC issued a non-binding presidential statement condemning the violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian
In the same month, the UN Human Rights Council called for the creation of a fact-finding mission and, pursuant to the mission’s findings, including those on patterns of human rights violations that may amount to crimes against humanity, an Independent International Commission of Inquiry [hereinafter Commission of Inquiry or Commission] was formed. In October 2011, the UN Secretary-General condemned the violence and called for its immediate cessation, and in November, the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution calling on the Syrian government to implement a peace plan proposed by the Arab League. In early 2012, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was appointed as UN-Arab League Joint Special Envoy.

On February 26, 2012, the Syrian Constitution was amended by referendum. The new Constitution established a seven-year limitation on the Presidency and repealed Article 8, which had enshrined the Ba’ath Party’s supremacy in political life. Assad passed legislative decrees in late 2011 which also formally introduced a multi-party system. However, other provisions placed limitations on the formation of political parties. Further, the referendum was not monitored by international observers, and both the document and the process were rejected by the SNC.

On March 25, 2012, the Syrian government agreed to a six-point plan proposed by Annan’s mission and endorsed by the UNSC. The plan provided for, inter alia, a ceasefire, enabling humanitarian assistance, the release by the government of arbitrarily detained persons, enabling of the movement of journalists into and throughout the country, and respecting the right to freedom of assembly. The UN Supervision Mission in Syria [hereinafter UNSMIS], a 90-day mission of unarmed observers specifically charged with monitoring the ceasefire and implementation of the peace plan, was subsequently deployed under the UNSC mandate, but the ensuing period saw an escalation in attacks by both sides. On May 25, 2012, amidst armed confrontations between government and opposition armed forces in the town of Taldou in Homs Governorate, more than 100 people were reportedly killed, the significant majority being women and children who appeared to have been deliberately targeted inside their homes. The Commission of Inquiry reported that forces loyal to the government – including Shabiha – may have been responsible, although its findings were inconclusive. In response to the incident, 11 countries expelled Syrian diplomats.

A humanitarian crisis developed in parallel with the escalating violence. Thousands of refugees crossed into neighboring countries, and in October 2012, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [hereinafter UNHCR] reported that 500,000 persons were displaced inside Syria. In its June 2012 report, the Commission of Inquiry reported a growing number of attacks targeting persons based on their religious affiliation, whereas previously victims had been targeted based on their pro- or anti-government stance. By July 2012, violence had spread to Aleppo, and the UN Secretary-General expressed concern over the use of shelling and heavy weapons against civilians. On the same day that the International Committee of the Red Cross [hereinafter ICRC] declared the Syrian conflict to be a non-international armed conflict, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay called on the UNSC to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court [hereinafter ICC]. In mid-August 2012, Kofi Annan resigned as Joint Special Envoy, citing increasing militarization and a lack of unity in the UNSC. A new Joint Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, was appointed. In the meantime, a decision was taken not to renew the UNSMIS mandate.
As the conflict has continued, an increasing number of armed groups have emerged on all sides. Starting in October 2011, jihadist groups boasting a more conservative Islamic or jihadist orientation began to operate in Syria in opposition to the Assad regime. One of the largest known groups, Jabhat Al-Nusra (Al-Nusra Front), is affiliated with and reportedly receives financial support from Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Other groups, including the Ahrar Al-Sham Brigade and the Suqour Al-Sham Brigade, began operations in late 2011 out of the Idlib Governorate. Such groups are not aligned with the FSA or with the successor to the SNC, and there have been increasing reports of fighting between the FSA and jihadist groups. The participation of large numbers of foreign fighters in the opposition forces in Syria, including fighters from Iraq, Jordan, Pakistan, and Yemen, among other countries, has been largely linked to jihadist groups.

In September 2012, the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, also known as the Syrian Liberation Front [hereinafter SLF] was formed as a coalition of 20 Islamist groups, with tens of thousands of fighters across Syria. Some groups within the SLF also claim to fall under the FSA, but the SLF leadership maintains it operates independently.

On the side of the Assad regime, defections from the SAA have left the institution weaker, with many young men of conscription age taking refuge in neighboring countries to avoid mandatory service. However, the existence of powerful security departments, the rise of Popular Committees, the operation of Shabiha, and, more recently, the formation of the National Defense Forces [hereinafter NDF], have extended support for the SAA. Initially, Popular Committees proliferated around the country as neighborhood defense organizations, usually along sectarian lines, to protect pro-government or politically neutral neighborhoods. Reports as to the degree of their engagement in the conflict vary, but according to the more recent reports, Popular Committees were absorbed into the NDF. The latter is aimed at developing the guerilla warfare capacity of the Syrian Government Forces and has recently been estimated to comprise up to 100,000 fighters. Palestinian Popular Committees formed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command [hereinafter PFLP-General Command] fought against pro-opposition Palestinian factions inside Yarmouk Camp and against the armed opposition in other districts. In May 2013, Lebanese Hezbollah forces officially entered the conflict in support of Syrian Security’s campaign to reclaim Al-Qusayr, following months of speculation that Hezbollah fighters were providing support to the regime inside Syria. Iranian security forces have also been reported to be supporting the Syrian Security apparatus on the ground in Syria, although not in open combat. Most recently, Iran has been reported to be arming and training the NDF.

It is more difficult to define the position of Kurdish groups in Syria. Politically, they are divided along two main lines: the Democratic Union Party [hereinafter PYD] and the Kurdish National Council [hereinafter KNC]. The former is generally considered to be aligned with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party [hereinafter PKK] in Turkey. Since the Assad regime ceded power in northeastern Syria in mid-2012, the PYD established control over five towns, excluding Qamishli, the area’s largest urban center. The KNC is an umbrella group of 16 Syrian-Kurdish political parties with connections to the Kurdish Democratic Party [hereinafter KDP] in Iraq. Each block has its own militia; the PYD is supported by the Popular Protection Units [hereinafter YPG] and the KNC by the Special Coordination Committee. Intra-Kurdish fighting has been reported; however, more serious clashes have taken place between Kurdish groups on
one side and the FSA and jihadist groups on the other. Some accuse the Kurds of acting as a proxy for the Assad regime, but Kurdish groups argue that they are defending their communities. It is generally believed that the Kurds will seek to assert some level of autonomy under any new regime. New groups and coalitions continue to form on all sides as the conflict continues.

As the military picture has grown more complex, so has the political opposition’s struggle to define itself. In November 2012, minority groups and groups operating inside Syria formed a new coalition, the Syrian National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (commonly referred to as the National Coalition). It currently includes, inter alia, Local Coordination Committees of Syria, a grassroots network of roughly 70 coordination groups operating at the local council level, as well as internal opposition groups within Syria and the Supreme Military Council, representing the FSA. The National Coalition has been widely recognized by foreign governments as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, and on March 26, 2013, it was granted Syria’s seat in the Arab League. Several militant Islamist groups, including Jabhat Al-Nusra, reject the validity of the National Coalition.

On August 4, 2013, Anti-Regime Armed Groups reportedly killed at least 190 civilians and seized over 200 hostages during a military offensive that began in rural Latakia. On August 21, 2013, graphic footage was posted on the Internet showing an apparent chemical attack against civilians in the Ghouta area, in the suburbs of Damascus. In a September 13, 2013 report, UN weapons inspectors reported that there was “overwhelming and indisputable” evidence of the use of nerve gas in Syria, as well as “clear and convincing evidence” that sarin gas was delivered by surface-to-surface rockets in the August 21 attack. The inspectors’ mandate did not include a determination as to who was responsible for the attack, and the Assad government denied having launched chemical weapons. The US, United Kingdom, and France claimed to have proof that the Assad regime used chemical weapons against the civilian population, whereas Russia criticized the UN mission’s report, contending that the attack was more likely the work of rebel forces. The US threatened military intervention to prevent the Syrian Government from future use of chemical weapons, but the action was suspended when Syria agreed to a Russian-brokered compromise plan to destroy its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. Pursuant to UNSC Resolution 2118, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons [hereinafter OPCW] began preliminary inspections of Syria’s chemical weapons arsenal on October 1, 2013, and destruction began on October 6, 2013. By the end of October, the OPCW declared that Syria had destroyed all its declared chemical weapons mixing, filling, and production facilities, and all of the chemical weapons at inspected sites had been placed under seal.

After failed attempts at bringing the parties to the Syrian conflict together, the UN Secretary-General announced on November 25, 2013 that he will convene a conference on Syria in Geneva on January 22, 2014. This conference (Geneva II) will bring the Syrian Government and opposition together at the negotiating table for the first time since the start of the conflict.

C. Legal Context

On July 14, 2012, the ICRC classified the conflict in Syria as a non-international armed conflict. The ICRC’s finding indicates that international humanitarian law applies throughout the country and governs
the conduct of the parties engaged in hostilities. Cases of non-international armed conflict are governed by Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions and Article 1 of Additional Protocol II. Both Common Article III and Additional Protocol II require certain standards of behavior from parties engaged in conflict, regardless of whether those parties are state or non-state groups. Syria is a state party to the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949, and thus also their Common Article III. Syria has not ratified Additional Protocol II, but is a party to the Geneva Conventions, which enjoy universal ratification; however, a strong case can be made for application of many portions of Additional Protocol II to the Syrian conflict as customary international law. Thus, based on the presumption that the Syrian conflict meets Additional Protocol II’s threshold stipulations, this report discusses the application of some of its protections and prohibitions to Syria Government Forces, Affiliated Groups, and Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

International human rights law also applies to the parties to the Syrian conflict. Fundamental principles of international human rights law are codified in a series of international treaties and instruments to which Syria is a state party. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [hereinafter ICCPR], the Convention against Torture [hereinafter CAT], and the Convention on the Rights of the Child [hereinafter CRC]. Under international human rights law, state parties have an obligation not only to protect individuals from abuses of these human rights, but also to take positive action to ensure that citizens are able to enjoy their rights. Further, it is increasingly accepted among the international community that non-state actors are obligated to respect customary human rights law norms, particularly where those actors “exercise some degree of control over a given territory and its population.”

Both government actors and non-state actors who violate customary international humanitarian law and the provisions contained in Common Article III (as well as Additional Protocol II, should it apply) may potentially be held accountable for their crimes under international criminal law, that body of law that ascribes individual criminal responsibility. While Syria is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court [hereinafter Rome Statute], the treaty establishing the ICC; the ICC can obtain jurisdiction over crimes committed in Syria if the UNSC refers the Syria situation to the Court. Conflicts in Libya and Darfur have successfully been referred to the ICC in this manner. Moreover, although Syria has not ratified the Rome Statute, it has signed it. As such, it is required to refrain from “acts which would defeat the object and purpose” of the treaty.

Compliance with Syria’s domestic laws was not the focus of this study, which instead addresses the actions of parties in the Syrian conflict in the context of Syria’s international legal obligations. However, it should be noted that multiple provisions of Syria’s Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Law, and the laws and procedures pertaining to Syria’s Military Courts appear not to be in compliance with Syria’s international legal obligations.

A detailed explanation of the international legal principles applicable to the Syria conflict as well as the specific violations and abuses identified in this report is contained in Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.
D. Displaced Persons and Regional Implications of the Syria Conflict

At the time of publication of this report, it is estimated that as many as 6.5 million people are displaced inside Syria as a result of the conflict and more than 2.5 million have sought refuge outside the country. UNHCR records show that, as of November 2013, more than 2.2 million Syrians are registered or awaiting registration throughout the Middle East and North Africa region countries, principally Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. This number does not include refugees electing not to register. In addition, approximately 100,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria [hereinafter PRS] are scattered across the region. They are assisted by the UN Relief and Works Agency [hereinafter UNRWA].

Regional implications of the conflict in Syria go beyond the issue of the displaced. A discussion of the Syria conflict in a regional context, including the responses and positioning of its neighbors, is contained in Annex (A), Regional Implications of the Syria Conflict.

E. Respondent Population Demographics

The report’s findings are based on a survey of 884 household representatives. The average household size was 6.9 members. Of the 884 interviews, 812 interviews were conducted using the sampling methodology described above (the “sample population”), representing a population of 5,602. The following statistics are drawn from this 812 member sample population. The sample population respondents’ ages ranged from 18-93, with a median of age 34 and a mean of age 37. 54.2% of respondents were women and 44.8% were men. The ethnic and religious homogeneity of the sample population is reflected by the fact that the vast majority of respondents identified themselves as Arab (86.8%) and Sunni Muslim (89.8%). 65.0% of the sample population was located in Jordan and 34.9% was in Lebanon.

The distribution of survey respondents’ previous residency is depicted in the following graphic, Graphic 1. The vast majority of Syrian refugees in the survey reported having previously lived in Homs (314, 38.7%), Dar’a (229, 28.2%), and Damascus (115, 14.2%). Survey respondents also came from Idlib (44, 5.4%), Hama (38, 4.7%), Hasakah (34, 4.2%), Aleppo (28, 3.4%), Raqqa (6, 0.7%), Deir Al-Zour (2, 0.2%), and Quneitra (1, 0.1%).
Graphic 1. Map of Syria, Showing a Breakdown of Survey Respondents’ Governorates of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>(3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>(14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar’a</td>
<td>(28.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deir al-Zour</td>
<td>(0.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hama</td>
<td>(4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasakah</td>
<td>(4.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homs</td>
<td>(38.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idlib</td>
<td>(5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latakia</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quneitra</td>
<td>(0.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raqqa</td>
<td>(0.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suweida</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartus</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Analysis of Survey Results

This analysis elaborates on major themes that emerged from the 884 interviews conducted among Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon between January and July, 2013. These themes are drawn from the 812 interviews that form the quantitative data set, though some narratives are included from the 72 interviews that did not qualify for the quantitative analysis. The purpose of this section is threefold. First, it sets forth quantitative data from the 812 surveys in numeric and graphical form to show key areas of harm suffered by the survey population affected and the extent of that harm. Where possible, the quantitative data also indicates the perpetrator groups that were reasonably believed to be responsible for the harm recorded. Second, it includes personal narratives and analysis from the total 884 surveys that demonstrate not only the extent, but also the nature of human rights violations and abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law occurring inside Syria. These accounts are based on detailed notes taken during interviews and are conveyed in first-person style to capture the story as told by the respondent. Third, this analysis includes findings that could not be drawn from the quantitative data due to limitations in the survey or methodology but that are critical to gain a full picture of the conflict. Each violation or abuse highlighted below includes a summary of the applicable international legal principles. Although the summaries include references to the Rome Statute and other international criminal law statutes, the study does not purport to make conclusions as to criminal responsibility.

A. Graphical Comparative Analysis of Harms Suffered by Households Surveyed

Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups identified by respondents in the context of harms reported in this study included the SAA, Syrian Arab Air Forces, Syrian Security and Intelligence Agencies, Shabiha, and the Syrian police. Anti-Regime Armed Groups were principally identified as FSA or Jabhat Al-Nusra, although lesser known groups opposed to the Syrian regime are likely to have been involved in incidents (see Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups). The same perpetrator groupings are used throughout this report.

Overall, the number of incidents attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups (166) is low compared with the number attributed to the Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups (3,298 incidents) in our sampled population. There were 19.9 times more incidents of harm attributed to Syrian Government Forces than attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups by the population surveyed. This indicates that the force used and the harm done to our study population by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups was significantly greater than that of Anti-Regime Armed Groups, or that it was more widely reported. A difference in reporting may be compounded by several factors. First, Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups were identified with greater certainty than Anti-Regime Armed Groups (see Section 6, Challenges and Limitations). Second, the demographic profile of respondents to the survey appears to be relevant. For example, Christian respondents reported far more abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups than by Syrian Government Forces. Moreover, many allegations of abuse by Anti-Regime Armed Groups did not meet the
reasonable belief standard because they were not proximate – i.e., they were not witnessed by the respondent or did not occur within the respondent’s household. In such cases, the incident was not coded or the incident was coded but the perpetrator was coded as “unknown.” Incidents that could not be attributed to a particular armed group or category of armed groups, including acts of general criminality, are discussed in Section 4(F), Unattributed Incidents. Finally, the number of events committed by different armed groups was not distributed evenly across governorates, nor was the population of households we surveyed. ABA ROLI did not do random sampling inside Syria, and it is possible that the population we surveyed came from areas where Syrian Government Forces were predominant, and thus the survey population was more likely to have encountered Syrian Government Forces than other armed groups.

i. Harms to Person

Graphic 2, shows the frequency with which respondents reported key areas of harm and the categories of perpetrator to whom the harm was attributed in response to the questions, “Were you or any member of your household harmed? In what way?” Each response was coded as one of more than 20 categories of harm to person. Household, for the purposes of this study, was defined as all individuals who lived with the respondent while in Syria or who have left Syria since March 2011 and are living under the same roof in Jordan/Lebanon; sharing food and space. This may constitute more than one family or extended family as well as non-family members. Respondents were not required to have personally witnessed an incident in order to report a harm within the same household.

**Graphic 2. Were You or Any Member of your Household Harmed? In What Way? (Reported By Perpetrator Group)**
As shown in Graphic 2, killings were most often attributed to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups; respondent accounts of killings by Syrian Government Forces are elaborated in Section 4(B)(iv), Willful or Arbitrary Killings. A number of killings by Anti-Regime Armed Groups were also documented, and respondent testimonies are elaborated in Section 4(C)(ii), Killings of Civilians. A significant number of documented killings, either witnessed events or killings of members of a respondent’s household, could not be attributed, and are discussed in Section 4(F), Unattributed Incidents. These attacks fall under the “other perpetrator” column.

As used in the Graphic above, the term “deprivation of liberty” includes arrests, detentions, abductions/kidnapping, and disappearances. Because respondents who reported that they or a family member were detained by Syrian Government Forces also typically reported a preceding arrest, deprivation of liberty may contain two “harm reports” regarding related incidents. It is, therefore, more helpful to break down the number of reports of deprivation of liberty as 201 arrests, 99 detentions, and 18 abductions. However, it must also be noted that some respondents reported that multiple members of their household were subject to arrest, detention, and/or torture by Syrian Government Forces. If those arrests and detentions occurred together, the data was combined into one incident report. In a population of 812 randomly-selected households, this can be characterized as a very high incidence of harm. Similarly, 101 reports of torture attributed to Syrian Government Forces also appears to be high given the disincentives to reporting incidents of torture (see Section 4(B)(ii), Torture and Cruel Treatment).

Other forms of personal harm, such as home raids, SGBV, and beatings, are delineated in the analyses below but do not appear in the above Graphic because respondents did not consistently report these kinds of harms when questioned about harms to themselves or members of their households.

ii. Property Loss

Graphic 3, below, shows the frequency with which respondents reported suffering property loss in response to the question: “Did your household own property or things that were destroyed or stolen? If yes, what items?” This Graphic also shows the categories of perpetrators reported to have caused the property loss. The purpose of this question was to document the losses suffered by respondents and members of their household. Respondents were not required to have personally witnessed an incident reported in order to report the harm.
As with other categories of harm, destruction and theft of property were more frequently attributed to Syrian Government Forces than to Anti-Regime Armed Groups. However, property loss and destruction were also more often unattributed than incidents of personal harm, because incidents involving property loss and destruction were frequently not witnessed. Respondents often reported leaving their homes in anticipation of bombardment and thus did not witness the attacks which led to the reported destruction of their homes. Moreover, the act of abandoning their homes and businesses made respondents’ properties more vulnerable to theft and destruction. An analysis of events surrounding the theft and destruction of household property is contained in Sections 4(B)(vii), Bombardment of Civilian Objects; 4(B)(viii), Destruction and Theft of Property; 4(C)(i), Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives; and 4(C)(iv), Other Human Rights Abuses.

B. Violations by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups

i. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

Multiple sources of international law prohibit the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, as defined below. For further background on international laws prohibiting arbitrary deprivation of liberty, discussed here in the context of arbitrary arrest and detention by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.
Arbitrary deprivation of liberty is defined as:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Arbitrary deprivation of liberty is defined as:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arrest or detention undertaken without one or more of the following requirements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A legal basis; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• informing the arrested person of reasons for arrest; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• bringing the arrested person promptly before a judge or similar independent body; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• providing the detainee with opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of his or her detention.</td>
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</table>

Frequent and consistent respondent accounts evince a systematic practice of arbitrary arrest and detention by Syrian Government Forces in violation of Syria’s obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. Respondents gave detailed accounts of arrests without a legal basis and of procedures which violated multiple due process rights. In a total of 350 incidents, respondents reported that they or a member of their household was arrested by Syrian Government Forces or that they witnessed civilians being “taken” by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups under circumstances that would constitute arbitrary arrest. According to descriptions provided by the respondents, men between the ages of 18 and 45 were the most vulnerable to arbitrary arrest, but incidents involving minors, older men, and women were also recorded. The highest incidents were reported in Damascus (30), Homs (129), and Dar’a (116) governorates. Many of the incident reports involved the arrest of multiple persons.

Arrests were reportedly carried out by SAA, Syrian Intelligence, and Shabiha. Respondents reported that arrests initially targeted individuals who participated in the uprising, but with time became far-reaching and indiscriminate. The most commonly reported reasons and circumstances of arrest can be summarized as follows, although specific numbers cannot be provided under each category as the reasons for arrest reported by respondents were not quantified:

- Individuals were often arrested due to participation in or suspected participation in demonstrations. Arrests occurred both during and after demonstrations. In the latter case, identifications would be made based on video and photographic footage from demonstrations and reports from informants. Syrian Government Forces, most often Syrian Security or SAA, would then enter the homes of the identified individuals, usually by force, in order to make an arrest.

- SAA, Security, and Shabiha were widely reported to have conducted neighborhood raids on areas considered to be harboring members of Anti-Regime Armed Groups (the groups were typically characterized as FSA) or areas that were seen as supporting the uprising. Respondents from diverse areas reported that males, typically between the ages of 18 and 45, were arrested in large numbers during these raids. Arrests would occur via forcible entry of

Respondents reported a total of 350 incidents of arbitrary arrest by Syrian Government Forces or Affiliated Groups. Many of these incidents involved the arrest of multiple people.

Respondents were arrested while out collecting essential provisions for their families and neighbors.
homes and on the streets. Arrests of groups – reportedly up to 50 persons at a time – were reported. Respondents reported that in some cases, arrestees were subsequently transported by bus to detention facilities. In other cases, mass executions following arrests were reported. See Section 4(B)(iv), Willful or Arbitrary Killings.

- Some respondents reported that they were arrested and detained due to their provision of food and medical assistance to members of Anti-Regime Armed Groups (typically identified as FSA) as well as for allowing the use of their homes as a field hospital, whether for civilians or combatants.

- Several respondents reported that they or others were arrested for alleged use of the internet or other forms of non-violent support for the uprising. For example, one respondent stated that he was arrested for writing poetry in support of the FSA.

- Several respondents were arrested while leaving their homes to obtain essential provisions, such as water, milk, and bread, for their families and neighbors while the neighborhood was under curfew or during neighborhood raids by Syrian Government Forces.

- Several respondents reported that they or a member of their household were arrested or detained because they had the same name as a person who had been identified as a member of the armed opposition. Arrests based on mistaken identity most commonly occurred at checkpoints during identification checks.

- It was reported that family members of wanted individuals were frequently arrested with or instead of the person wanted by Syrian Security. Based on reported statements, this practice was ostensibly used as a means to induce the wanted person to come out of hiding but would also appear to be a form of collective punishment. Arrests of other family members extended to women and elderly family members.

Beatings, and in many cases, verbal abuse, including insults and religion-based slurs, usually accompanied arrests. Arbitrary arrests and beatings occurring inside the victims’ homes frequently took place in the presence of small children. Respondents reported that children showed signs of trauma after such incidents.

No respondent reported that he or she was presented with an arrest warrant upon arrest, and most respondents were not informed of the reason for their arrest until a later stage in the detention process. Arrestees and their family members were not informed of where they would be taken, and arrestees were typically blindfolded while being transferred to a detention facility. Reported periods of detention ranged from days, to months, to ongoing detention since early in the conflict. Several respondents reported that family members had “disappeared” (see Section 4(B)(iii), Enforced Disappearances) or remained in detention.
Respondents reported 96 incidents in which they or a member of their household was detained by Syrian Government Forces. The number of incidents of detention “witnessed” (i.e., not occurring in the respondent’s household) was not separately documented. The highest numbers were reported in Homs (45 incidents) and Dar’a (30 incidents).

Respondents reported being detained in prisons and detention facilities in areas near the point of arrest. Air Force Intelligence was the most commonly reported authority over detention facilities. Respondents consistently reported inhumane conditions and treatment in detention as outlined in Section 4(B)(ii), Torture and Cruel Treatment. A small number of respondents reported having had access to a lawyer while in detention. Appearances before a judge were infrequently reported. In cases where the detainee did appear before a judge, his or her release was usually conditioned on signing a commitment not to participate in future demonstrations.

In many cases, respondents reported that release of the detainee occurred upon payment of a substantial bribe, usually arranged through an intermediary. Bribes were reportedly paid to judges and/or security personnel. One respondent noted that his family sold his house in order to pay a bribe of 600,000 Syrian Pounds (approximately 8,840 US Dollars in August 2012, the time of the incident) to secure his release.

The accounts below are illustrative of a range of circumstances of arrest and detention without a legal basis and in violation of international standards of due process as well as Syrian laws and procedures, including: failure to inform the arrested person of the reasons for their arrest; failure to bring the arrested person promptly before a judge or similar independent body; and failure to provide the detainee with an opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of detention. The accounts also evince misconduct by government personnel as well as abuse and mistreatment while in detention. The accounts are first-hand or portray incidents occurring to members of the respondent’s own household. Further accounts of arbitrary arrest and detention are also included under Section 4(B)(ii), Torture and Cruel Treatment.

A 23-year-old woman from a town in Rif Damashq described how Syrian Security raided her home, and forcibly arrested and detained her 26-year-old husband and his 50-year-old father, apparently due to her husband’s participation in demonstrations and provision of medical assistance to the injured.

> About one and half years ago [around October 2011], my husband was arrested and beaten in front of me and then detained for 45 days. I was pregnant at the time and gave birth two days after his arrest. They also arrested but did not beat his father. The incident occurred at 7:00 p.m. About 30 people from state security raided the house through two doors. When they identified my husband, they started beating him. They were all in military uniform; there were no civilians. He was arrested because he participated in demonstrations [and]; provided medical assistance to the injured. They showed my husband pictures of him taken during demonstrations. His parents hired a lawyer and got him out. He was obliged to sign a commitment not to participate in demonstrations [as a condition of release].
The respondent’s husband told her of overcrowding and mistreatment in detention and told her that he was beaten and tortured on three occasions during the 45 days of detention. He was not permitted visits or exercise.

The following is a first-hand account by a 23-year-old woman who was forcibly arrested, beaten, threatened, and after several days of not being informed of the reasons for her arrest, charged with a long list of offenses.

"I was arrested while walking on the street. I had left the house to buy credit for my cell phone. Three cars pulled up; there were about five men in each car. Some were wearing green military uniforms, and some were in civilian clothing. Six men got out of the car; all of them [were] armed and in military clothes. I was alone on the road. One of them covered my mouth with his hand, and I was carried to the car with a rifle pointed at my head. They took me to state security [respondent said she recognized the building]. They put me in an underground cell and beat me with their hands. I asked them, “What have I done?” and pleaded with them to tell my family. I cried and tried to kiss the hands of the officer. I waited for two hours, but they did not tell me what I had done. Then they took me, handcuffed, to the prison.

The respondent reported that she was interrogated during the first four days and repeatedly threatened and insulted. She was handcuffed and blindfolded for one entire day, before and during interrogation. She reported being beaten twice, once during interrogation by a security officer and once at the central prison by a prison guard who hit her with the back of his rifle while she was handcuffed. During interrogation, she was told that if she did not confess, she would be charged with murder, and her requests to contact her family were denied. After three days without interrogation, she was interviewed again and threatened with a form of abuse known as “the tire.” She was refused water and left in a cold room, handcuffed tightly, with nowhere to sit. She reported:

"After some time, I was brought water, the handcuffs were loosened, and I was allowed to sit down. The officer returned to the room and told me, “I have to finish this interview now. You must confess.” He showed me a piece of paper with charges listed on it: participation in demonstrations, smuggling of papers for the FSA, aiding the killing [of regime soldiers and personnel], insulting the President, sectarianism, inciting ethnic cleansing of Alawites, and being an accomplice to the murder of an Alawite officer. I started crying. Then the phone rang. It was the head of the branch and the officer went upstairs. When he returned, there was a total change of behavior; he was like a brother. He said there was a mistake and that someone must have used “good offices” [contacts] and that he would help as much as he could. He said that I would stay in prison until it was resolved.

Two days later, the respondent met with the Head of Political Security. She described him as being kind to her. At the end of their meeting he said, “If I want anything, I will call you. Help us help your country” (implying that she be an informant). The respondent agreed in order to be released. Several days later
she appeared before a judge. During her appearance, there was no one present except the judge, the judge’s clerk, and a guard at the door. The judge told her mother that he would do everything he could to release her, but then refused to sign a motion for her release. The respondent’s mother then went to the judge’s house and spoke to his wife, and the respondent was finally released after her family paid a bribe to the judge.

A 36-year-old respondent explained the circumstances of his arrest at a checkpoint. His account is illustrative of the arbitrary nature of arrests reportedly occurring at SAA checkpoints and of the subsequent violations of arrestees’ due process rights, including the failure to inform the respondent of his due process rights and the failure to bring the respondent promptly before a judge.

I was arrested [and detained] for 30 days by the Syrian Army because I was in [a particular area]. I was stopped at the checkpoint. Then a car came with an officer and another soldier. The soldier hit me on the neck and asked me “Why did you participate in demonstrations?” I said, “I am with the President,” so they stopped. They covered my eyes with my shirt and took me to Mezza Airport. They put me in a cell with 11 people. They didn’t hit me. In the cells, they were cursing all the detainees. Fourteen days after arrest, I was interrogated. They asked me how many demonstrations and funerals I participated in. I told them that I did not participate in any. Before I was discharged, I promised not to participate in any demonstrations or funerals, and to keep them updated if I knew something.

The following first-hand account by a 43-year-old respondent from Dar’a provides a further example of a lack of due process, the poor conditions during detention, including the transfer of detainees in shipping containers, and torture and beatings in detention (further elaborated on in Section 4(B)(ii), Torture and Cruel Treatment). The respondent was informed that he was arrested for possession of a weapon without a license and for “instigating sectarian strife.”

I was arrested and taken to the [local army unit] for two days, then taken to Damascus. Then I was beaten by electrical cables, pushed down a staircase, and my hands were tied and I was hung naked and beaten. We were transported by shipping containers, 300 people in one container; it barely takes 100 people. Two days standing up, sweating and pressure. Some people died from the torture, [which was perpetrated] using metal pipes and electrocution. In the Air Force Intelligence branch in Somariyeh, I spent a month being tortured. I was detained for three and a half months. I was taken to the Mezza Airport, 100 meters underground, in a one meter by one meter cell. I paid money to be released.

A 21-year-old university student in Dar’a recalled how he was detained by the SAA during a demonstration at his university.

I was a university student in Syria. Due to the destruction and the siege on Dar’a we decided to organize a peaceful movement at the university to break the siege on Dar’a. About 200 people went out inside the university. The army surrounded the university
and hit us, and there were arbitrary arrests. I was detained. They accused us of destroying the country and insulted us with foul language. They decided to detain us without a trial.

In this case, the respondent was allowed access to an attorney.

A 34-year-old male survey respondent from an outer-suburb of Damascus provided the following first-hand account of his arrest and detention. The respondent’s arrest and first beating occurred in front of his four-year-old child. The respondent recounted the grave conditions of detention, including overcrowding, infestation by rats, and inadequate food.

At 8:30 at night I was arrested and kicked in front of my family, in my home. My four-year-old was traumatized. There were soldiers in military uniform and people in civilian clothes. There were masked people, including a woman. My eyes were covered, and I was handcuffed. I was beaten as soon as I arrived [at the detention center] and was asked to take off all my clothes and underwear as they searched me for weapons. Over the course of 22 days, I was tortured around seven times. They beat me and kicked me, usually before interrogation. I stayed in a room with 60 to 70 people. Some had been beaten and were crying. Some had bruises on their bodies and marks from cigarette burns. The place was full of rats. Three times per day, we were given one plate to share between seven people with one loaf of bread. We were prevented from fasting. They threw urine on us and beat us on our feet.

The respondent specified that he was beaten on his feet with a club and that he was placed in a tire to restrict his movement. He identified the detention facility as being operated by Air Force and Military Intelligence, and he stated that there were six to ten people responsible for the beatings/torture. He noted that the interrogator did not participate in the beating. The respondent was not presented with an arrest warrant when arrested. He was told that he was arrested for participation in demonstrations, and was forced to sign a confession. When he appeared before a judge, he was asked if he would participate in future demonstrations. He was released and “thrown” near the airport highway three days later. He was not allowed to see an attorney during this entire process.

Another respondent reported an incident in Dar’a wherein her husband was arrested and beaten during a Syrian Security raid on her home. The respondent reported that one of the soldiers was speaking in a language other than Arabic. The respondent believed it to be Farsi. The circumstances surrounding her husband’s arrest and detention – the absence of an arrest warrant, the rounding up of scores of men during a neighborhood raid, interrogation without a specific basis, and subsequent quick release – pointed to the arbitrary nature of the arrest.

There were continued raids of the village to arrest men and children. My house was raided four times. During one of the raids [in June 2011], my husband [43 years old] was arrested. Ten soldiers entered the house and searched it; they were in Syrian Security uniform. They arrested my husband in front of me and my children [eight and 11 years old]. They beat him during arrest using an electrical cable. Then he was placed along
with a group of men [around 60 or more] in a white security bus. He stayed [in detention] for a day. They were taken to Da’a for interrogation. I saw the torture marks on his back from electrical cables. They asked my husband, “Are you a terrorist? Are you a spy? Do you participate in demonstrations?” They said, “Who is your God?” ordering him to say “Bashar.” My husband told me this. [These events] terrorized our children.

The following account relating to a family from Homs illustrates how one individual in a family was arrested as a means of inducing another family member to surrender to the authorities. In addition to arbitrary deprivation of liberty, the account alleges circumstances of arrest and detention which may constitute “hostage taking,” in violation of Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions and as defined in the Rome Statute. See Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict, for further details on international legal sources regarding hostage taking.

My husband was detained for nine months and tortured. At first, my husband’s father (age 73) was arrested for six days to force my husband to surrender himself. During the detention, my father-in-law suffered from torture and was banned from using the bathroom for six days. After getting out of detention, he was semi-paralyzed. To force my husband to surrender himself, they sent a person to tell him that the health condition of his father was getting worse. That’s when my husband surrendered himself to the authorities.

Many respondents reported witnessing men and boys being rounded up during neighborhood raids in circumstances that appeared to constitute arbitrary arrest. Respondents typically described beatings and maltreatment during arrest. This was particularly prevalent in villages and cities in Da’a and Homs. The following examples are illustrative.

- In our village, there was a very big raid; more than 200 security personnel were beating those in the street until they collapsed and then [took them away] in a bus. They beat people using rifles on their heads. They would ask people “Who is your God?” If they answered anything other than Bashar, they would beat them. (Da’a, date not specified)

- Yes, [I witnessed] arrests. They beat the detainees. I was in my village and I saw the security take a large group, including the neighbors. They took them in a special white colored Shabiha bus. (Da’a, 2011, month not specified).

- The Syrian Army detained a group at a checkpoint and forced us to stand against a wall. They beat us and asked us for names of armed men. Then they let us go. (Homs, Aug. 2011).
• I saw an old man arrested when the army raided his house. They released him the next day, dead from torture. His family went to receive the body. (Dar’a, Oct. 2011)

• My neighbor was arrested (he is almost 60 years old) from in front of his home. They [Shabiha and soldiers] took him out of the house and arrested him violently. His wife said they told her Bashar will stay, Bashar is staying forever. (Homs, Dec. 2011)

• [SAA and Security] would surround neighborhoods. They would go in with a list of names. They would just take people, whoever they wanted. In one week, they came to our house four times. I saw them take my neighbor away. (Homs, Feb. 2012)

• My neighbors were detained (eight of them), and black bags were placed over their heads. They were beaten on their heads and yelled at, and then put into a black car. [The respondent described the perpetrators as Syrian Security, wearing black civilian clothing with black military boots.] (Idlib, May 2012)

• Fifty people of the area were detained for three days. I saw [the arrest] from the window of my home. They were repeatedly beaten and then put into civilian cars. They took their clothes off and blindfolded them. (Dar’a, July 2012)

• Many people were taken away, blindfolded with their own clothes. They would cuff them, put them in vehicles, and drive away. Most of the time, they took young men. If the activists were women, they would [target them]. (Dar’a, before Oct. 2012)

• When they [later specified as Syrian Government Forces] did house-to-house searches, they arrested around 40 people. Seven were released a month ago, and 33 are still detained. We don’t know what happened to them. (Dar’a, Oct. 2012)

• From my window, I saw the Syrian Army taking men. The men’s ages varied between 18-25 years old. (Rif Damashq, before Dec. 2012)

• A house was invaded, and five young people of the same family were taken. I saw the armed men (identified as Hezbollah based on appearance and dialect) breaking down the door and then entering the house. (Homs, Jan. 2013)

Respondents also reported witnessing arbitrary arrests of women. For example:

The neighbor’s daughter [23 years old] was detained because she went out in the demonstrations against the regime. She was beaten and dragged into [a car]. [The respondent described the perpetrators as uniformed Syrian Army personnel using a civilian vehicle.] (Dar’a, Dec. 2011)
Multiple sources of international law prohibit torture and cruel treatment, as defined below. For further background on the prohibition of torture, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

### Torture and cruel treatment is defined as:

Any act that causes severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, and is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as:

- obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession; or
- punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed; or
- intimidating or coercing him or a third person;

or the act is inflicted for any reason based on discrimination of any kind;

and

a public official or other person acting in an official capacity inflicts, instigates, consents, or acquiesces to the act. 

Detailed first-hand and same-household accounts of atrocities perpetrated in Syrian Government-operated detention facilities evince the use of torture in violation of multiple international treaties to which Syria is a state party. Moreover, the number of first-hand and same-household accounts of torture provided by survey respondents and the fact that respondents were drawn from multiple towns and governorates using a random sampling methodology suggests to a widespread practice. 97 respondents reported that they or a member of their household was tortured while in the custody of Syrian Government Forces. An additional 39 respondents reported witnessing incidents of torture. Multiple respondents who had been detained also reported second hand accounts of torture by other detainees and hearing the screams of torture victims but these were not reported as witnessed incidents.

Despite the high incidence of reported cases within the same household, a number of factors suggest that torture was actually under-reported in this survey: (1) deaths in custody are likely in part due to fatal injuries brought on by torture, but will not be captured as torture in the survey due to the lack of eyewitness or substantiated accounts; (2) respondents who have been tortured are likely to decline to be interviewed out of fear of reporting the events or due to the secondary trauma that might be experienced through the interview process; and (3) interviewers observed that some respondents were reluctant to report that they had been severely beaten or tortured even though other facts suggested that they had been subject to torture.

Roughly one in eight survey population respondents reported that they or a member of their household had been tortured while in the custody of the Syrian Government Forces.
According to first-hand accounts, severe beatings and interrogations were typically carried out by multiple assailants, usually one interrogator and one to three individuals conducting the beatings. Respondents gave consistent accounts of the torture methods used, which typically included:

- Whipping with electrical wires, commonly with a tool made of four cables.
- Electric shocks, including by dousing the victim in water before applying electrical currents and placing live wires on a detainee’s genitals.
- Suspension, including crucifixion, for extended periods ranging from several hours to days.
- Suspension from a tire and pounding against the wall.
- Isolation for periods ranging from days to months.
- Psychological intimidation, including verbal abuse and exposure to the sounds of other detainees being tortured.
- Severe beatings on various parts of the body, including the hands, feet, head, abdomen and men’s reproductive organs, using a range of objects, including rifles, leather belts, batons, and wooden and steel sticks.
- Exposure to severe weather conditions and deprivation of food and drink.
- Forced consumption, including forcing detainees to eat salt and drink kerosene.
- Sleep deprivation and interrupting of sleep patterns.
- Removing fingernails using pliers.
- Cutting off detainees’ limbs or fingers.
- Burning of detainees with cigarettes and other objects.

Multiple respondents reported deaths due to torture, based on viewing the wounds on the victim’s body when it was returned to their families.\(^63\)

The frequency and duration of incidents of torture varied among respondents, and some respondents could not reliably account for time due to the conditions they were subjected to. Some respondents were subject to intensive beatings over a short space of time; others were detained and tortured over prolonged periods.

Almost all respondents were subjected to multiple incidents or “sessions” of torture. Respondents were typically blindfolded while subject to torture, and therefore could rarely identify interrogators or assailants. Respondents could, however, generally identify the institutional authority of the facility in which they were detained and subjected to torture (see Section 4(B)(i), Arbitrary Arrest and Detention).
and in some cases were able to identify the commanders of the facilities. Interviewers refrained from pressing respondents to identify assailants unless they seemed readily willing to do so. There were also reports of the participation of foreigners (non-Arabic speakers) in interrogations.

Examples of Cruel and Degrading Treatment in Detention

In addition to reports of torture, respondents typically reported cruel and degrading treatment in detention. For example:

- Respondents typically reported both physical and psychological abuse by prison guards. Physical abuse was usually by kicking or punching or hitting with a club. Psychological abuse included insults directed at the detainee or his or her religion. Sexual attacks and threats were reported.

- Respondents who were detained reported that cells were extremely overcrowded. Some respondents reported sharing cells with 50 to 100 other men, with insufficient room for all detainees to sleep at the same time. The cells did not contain beds, mattresses, or chairs. Respondents sat and slept on the hard floor.

- Unhygienic conditions were reported. Some respondents reported that cells were infested with rats. The latrine was sometimes co-located in the detention cell, and respondents reported unbearable smell and waste littering the cell.

- Cells were within earshot of interrogation rooms, and detainees heard shouting and screams from other detainees.

- Where latrines were in a separate room, some respondents reported having inadequate access. Others reported being beaten by the guards whenever they visited the latrine.

- Respondents typically reported no or infrequent exercise or access to the outdoors.

- Food was insufficient and in many cases inedible. Typically, food was provided one to two times per day.

The accounts below are illustrative of a range of experiences of torture and cruel treatment in detention facilities operated primarily by Syrian Security and Intelligence Agencies. These accounts are first-hand and the majority is taken from interviews with randomly selected survey respondents (see Section 5, Project Methodology). The accounts are illustrative of the type and seriousness of incidents reported across the sample. The accounts below, together with the many other accounts of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment reported by survey respondents, demonstrate practices in violation of customary international law and Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions, applicable in the context of non-international armed conflict.

The following first-hand account is by a 34-year-old male survey respondent.
I was at home when nine men came and asked if I was [name]. I confirmed [this] and they took me away. They pulled my shirt over my head and took me to the prison. I was placed in an office. I showed them my work ID. They hit me on my chin with the handle of a rifle and insulted me. They accused me of being with the rebels, but I denied it. I told them I was an employee of [state news agency]. They put me in a cell in isolation. I used to hear shouting and screaming all the time. I could hear the voices of the other people who were tortured there. I was kept there for three days. When I was being interrogated, I kept repeating that I was an employee of [state news agency] but that I had been absent because of the security situation. I showed them my work identification, but they kept torturing me. I was tortured by electric shock. They spilled water over me and then shocked me. I could not see what they were using to do this as I was blindfolded. I was also beaten by a type of whip made of cables, probably four cables. I was tortured repeatedly at intervals during the first two days. On the third day, they apologized to me, saying that they know now that I am an employee [of the state].

When I left the detention facility, I could see that I was at the Air Force compound and had been in the Air Force Intelligence Center.

Upon specific questioning, the respondent indicated that the beatings were to the head, feet, hands, and back using fists as well as the described electrical cables. The interviewers observed scarring to the respondent’s chin and back and saw that the respondent was traumatized by the incident he described. He frequently used the expression “they offered me coffee for a short time” rather than specify the abuse he was subjected to.

The following is another first-hand account of detention and torture from a 25-year-old male respondent. Among other forms of torture, he reports being subjected to suspension for three days.

I was stopped at the [Syrian Army’s] Batikh Checkpoint, at the entrance of Yarmouk Camp. I was handcuffed and blindfolded. I don’t know where I was taken, but I heard it was the “Palestine Branch.” They started beating me as soon as I arrived in detention. I was tortured every day; sometimes in the morning and sometimes at night, even at 3:00 a.m. It usually lasted an hour. Once I was hanged for three full days. I was told that I had been identified as a member of the Free Syrian Army. I was detained in a basement in a cell with 60 people in it. We received one meal per day, and it was hard to eat.

When asked how he was tortured, the respondent stated that he was beaten all over his body with an electrical cable. He was also subjected to suspension and electric shocks. He was never presented with an arrest warrant nor formally charged. He believes he was detained “because I live in Yarmouk [Camp].” He did not appear before a judge and was not allowed an attorney. He was held for 15 days.

A 47-year-old respondent from Homs gave the following account of his torture, which included several forms of beating and electrocution, as well as nine months in isolation.

The torture took place with the Air Intelligence during the first 20 days of my detention. I was interrogated on “who was doing the rebellion?” and “who was financing and buying
the weapon?" I was accused of causing riots, writing [slogans] against the government and inciting sectarianism. I was subject to the worst conditions and torture. After the interrogation, I was confined to a solitary cell for nine months. I didn't see sunlight for nine months. I had one meal, boiled potatoes, each day. [During the first 20 days of detention,] I was tortured by electric shock, suspension from a tire and pounding against the wall, cursing and verbal abuse of all sorts, and suspension by my hands from a metal tube three times. [The respondent estimated that the first time was for three hours, the second time for four hours, and third time for six hours.]

The respondent also reported that he was forced to “sign” a confession by applying his fingerprints while blindfolded. After his nine months in confinement, he was put in a room with 400 other detainees before being transported into Homs for trial. He appeared before a military tribunal that referred his case to a civil judge. He was released after being found innocent. The respondent complained that his eyesight was damaged from the lack of exposure to the sun and that he suffered broken vertebrae as a result of the beatings. The interviewer observed that the respondent was in a state of constant back pain and experienced discomfort whether sitting, getting up from his chair or walking.

A 37-year-old male from Dar’a reported being subject to amputation of two fingers and a thumb, and reported that he did not receive treatment after falling ill.

They hunted me down, and then they detained me after I surrendered. They arrested me for participating in the demonstrations. [The conditions were] very bad. We were not allowed to go to the bathroom without permission and only twice a day. I got ill there and was not treated, in addition to the beating and insults. They dislocated my shoulder with a Kalashnikov, and they cut off my right thumb and index fingers. The judge was sympathetic to me and issued a decision to release me.

Similar to the other respondents, he also had no access to an attorney or visitation rights. He shared a cell with 57 other prisoners. He experienced restriction on movements, mock executions, and high levels of noise.

A 56-year-old man reported being held in isolation for the duration of his detention and being subjected to a range of torture methods.

I was detained by the Syrian Army while I was going out of my house to buy bread. I was detained at a Hiran checkpoint as my name was on the record and I was wanted. I was blindfolded, my hands were tied, and I was taken to Hiran and then to Sa’sa branch (military intelligence) for two months and 13 days. I was always blindfolded, and my hands were tied all that time. I was subjected to very bad curses and insults and was
beaten day and night. They would place me at the top of the stairs and push me down. I was put in a big fridge [and there was] a chopper [machete]; they wanted to chop my body. I was suspended by my feet with my head down while beaten heavily and burned with cigarettes and electric shocks. [I suffered] random beating to the head, feet, hands. They put their shoes in my mouth while my hands were tied. They [beat me with] fists, clubs, and guns. [I was restrained] with metal handcuffs.

The respondent reported that he was held in isolation throughout the period of detention. He was given three sandwiches per day and water for 25 seconds per day. He was beaten on the head while drinking. The respondent believed that he was arrested for writing poetry in support of the FSA and was told to appear on Syrian TV and confess to belonging to a terrorist group. He also described being subjected to threats against himself and his family, including threats of sexual violence.

[I was] threatened with rape if I didn’t confess. [They said,] “If you don’t confess we will bring your wife and daughter and rape them in front of you.” They would point a gun to my head and tell me I will be shot if I don’t confess. [I endured it for] two months and 13 days. [There was also] excessive noise, light, and smell.

Other respondents also reported threats of sexual violence against them and their families. A 21-year-old university student from Dar’a who was arrested during a demonstration on the university campus (see Section 4(B)(i), Arbitrary Arrest and Detention) reported the following abuse in detention.

Twice a week, [there were] beatings with electrical wires, whipping, and kicking with shoes for about half an hour. [There were] beatings to the head and feet, using fists; restrictions on movements, electrical shocks, threats to family, excessive noise, and smells.

A 35-year-old resident of Damascus reported being subject to physical beating and humiliation.

I was arrested at the border and taken to the intelligence prison in Damascus. My hands were tied, [and I was] blind-folded and beaten two to three times every day. We had engineers and people with PhDs with us. Most detainees were highly educated. When I was released, there were still 36 [detainees] in my cell. [Two of us were] released together from Dar’a.

When asked to describe how he was tortured, the respondent detailed his own experiences and those of others in his cell.
I endured beating of my feet, hands, and body using rifles and guns. Some mean soldiers would ask us to take off our clothes. We were allowed underwear. We were inspected in our underwear once. We all had charges on us. My charge was I was a singer in demonstration, so it was a light crime. They performed mock executions, saying, “this is the last day of your life, drink water, this is your last sip of water.” One of the detainees was hanged from his hands for three days continuously. They did that every day with him. There was an army captain who had defected and he was being tortured and was often electrocuted. [There was] a young man sent from Air Force Intelligence. He had been [almost] drowned in water there, and he was in very bad condition.

The respondent also described the conditions in the detention facility, Kafr Sousa Intelligence Branch, Damascus.

[There were] dark underground cells. There were many cells. There were 60 to 100 people in one cell sized six meters by four meters. It was crowded. We could not sleep. Many had to stand, and we let the newcomers sleep as it was hard for them.

Another first-hand account from a 42-year-old tells of a range of torture methods.

I was detained during a raid on my house. They accused me of holding weapons and took me to the criminal security branch in Dar’a. There, I was beaten for ten days. They used the bisat al-rih [flying carpet], the tire, and beat my feet. I was transferred to the political security branch in Damascus and stayed there for a month and 20 days. I was tortured with electricity and suspension and crushing cigarettes in my hands. I had to urinate on myself, and my leg was broken because of the torture and beating.

Humiliating and Degrading Treatment: Examples of Insults

“Outrages upon personal dignity” are defined in the ICC as acts that humiliate, degrade, or otherwise violate the dignity of a person to such a degree “as to be generally recognized as an outrage upon personal dignity.” The ICC also notes that “degrading treatment” can apply to dead persons and that the victim does not have to be personally aware of the humiliation. The cultural background of a person must be considered. This, then, encompasses treatment that is humiliating to someone of a particular nationality or religion.

Respondents frequently reported being insulted by Syrian Government Forces and members of Affiliated Groups, either by words or acts, whether at checkpoints, in the streets, during home raids, or during detention. Insults were typically directed at dishonoring the person and/or their religion.

One respondent stated that he was stopped by the 4th Squad of the SAA and Security Intelligence while walking out of a shop, beaten, and taken to the Air Force Intelligence branch at Mezza Airport. During his detention, an officer said to him, “You are worth an old shoe only.” Also, the same officer
brought a military boot and said to him and to others in the cell, "Kneel to this; this is your God."

Another respondent, whose husband was detained by Shabiha in a warehouse, recounted:

> They asked my husband, “Who is your prophet?” and told him, “It is Bashar.” They were insulting him using foul language.

Another respondent who was arrested for transferring water and milk to besieged rebel neighborhoods reported an SAA officer saying to him, “Do you want freedom? We’ll step on your heads.”

A 73-year-old man, from Homs, narrated the following:

> One of the soldiers pulled my beard, and they cursed me. They called me a racist and an extremist. They also threatened to run me over with the tank. One of the officers asked me, “Since you give opinions in the name of religion, if an Alawite is martyred, where does he go?” I told him, “When I become God I will tell you where.” He said go from here, and he threw my ID in my face, saying, “Don’t resist the regime again. You are a lowlife, pig, dog. I will step on your head with a shoe.”

Women similarly suffered insults and degrading treatment. A 26-year-old female respondent from Da’el, whose brother was beaten during a home raid by SAA and Shabiha, reported that one of the attackers said:

> If you want your brother safe, take your clothes off and let me sleep with you in front of your brother.

They reportedly insulted her mother during the same incident. A 34-year-old female respondent noted the insults and threats received during a house raid:

> They threatened to kill me. [They said,] “Lift the cover off your face, or we will empty our bullets in you.”

A 36-year-old respondent from Dar’a Governorate reported being harassed by repeated raids on her home by Syrian Government Forces when her husband was not present. She said that on one occasion she was changing her daughter’s diaper and a Syrian Security officer remarked, “If your daughter’s ** is **, how is your **?”

### iii. Enforced Disappearances

Enforced disappearances are criminalized under the Rome Statute, as defined in the following text box. For further international legal background on enforced disappearances, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.
Enforced disappearances are defined in the Rome Statute as:

“The arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time.”

Given the limited amount of data available, it is difficult to discern a pattern of enforced disappearances; however, respondent accounts demonstrate that the practice, as defined under the Rome Statute, is occurring. The survey produced reports of 23 incidents that could reasonably be believed to be enforced disappearances, based on same-household or proximate accounts of individuals having been arrested by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups (i.e., Shabiha), and based on the fact that the families in question had not been able to obtain any information about these individuals’ whereabouts. It is important to note that the number of disappearances is likely to have been under-reported in this study for several reasons. First, in cases where a person went missing with no eyewitness account of arrest or other reason for the person’s disappearance, the occurrence could not be reported as a “disappearance” according to the reasonable belief standard; and second, in cases where respondents witnessed the arrest of a person from outside the family or away from their home (e.g., at a checkpoint, from a bus), the respondent could not then testify to what happened to that person, and only the arrest could be recorded.

Included below are a range of examples, including disappearances of men arrested during home raids, family members of persons wanted by military intelligence, individuals who had organized and participated in demonstrations, and army defectors.

A respondent from Dar’a reported the events that led to the disappearance of his son.

First, they randomly shell, and then they enter into the town. The first line is the Army; the second line is the Security. They will first come in tanks, and the Shabiha will follow them in small buses. They take away anyone who has the same name as the person they are looking for without checking other details. In February 2012, they came to search our house. They searched and they stole things. They arrested my son, and he has disappeared since then. We don’t know if he is dead or alive. Someone told us he is in Air Force Intelligence, detained there.

A woman from the city of Homs described the circumstances, as reported to her, which led to the disappearance of her husband.

My husband went to get medicine for my kid, and they took him, along with his car. Now the regime is in our shops and house. My husband was unarmed. We thought that my husband was taken by the Air Force Intelligence, then after a few days individuals from the neighborhood informed me that the Shabiha took him. My husband was abducted in front of the pharmacy, and witnesses said that the car that took him was
already waiting there for ten minutes before my husband's arrival. The witnesses recognized them [the Shabiha]; they are from the neighborhood. They were waiting for him. Once he stopped his car to get the medicine, they attacked and beat him. There were two groups. One group took him, and the other group took his car. The neighbors told me that they asked whether [my husband] is [name] and then checked his ID before taking him. No one could do anything to rescue him because all were scared. I suspect that this happened because we are some of the few Sunnis living among Christians and Alawites in the neighborhood. I filed a report at the Criminal Security in [name of neighborhood], but they told me that they can do nothing because the popular committees are out of government control.

A 23-year-old respondent reported on the disappearance of his roommate at the University of Damascus.

I was a student at the University of Damascus. One week before I left, my roommate was arrested. His parents told me about the arrest. We used to go to rallies together. My friend has disappeared. That is why I left. Someone told me Air Force Intelligence was looking for me. They are the most terrible. We are all afraid of them.

Respondents also reported on disappearances of neighbors and extended family members (i.e., not from the same household), although such accounts were not included in the quantitative data. A respondent reported the following incidents in Dar’a.

My brother [35 years old] was arrested by the Military Security because he was organizing peaceful demonstrations. He is still in detention today, and we do not know anything about him.

A 35-year-old man from Homs reported that nine of his family members were taken away. The respondent reported that such incidents occur to pressure the wanted persons to surrender themselves in the hopes of saving family members. The respondent spoke of the following:

My uncle was killed, my cousin was killed, and two families have been abducted from my extended family; nine people in total, because of two wanted persons in these families. The government contacted us and said, “Give us the people, or we will kill the families.” They also contacted other cousins when a relative was kidnapped at a checkpoint. The cousins went to the Political Security office. They were told that he was there but not released. They went again, and they were told the same thing. Then the third time, they were told he was not there.

There were also reports by respondents of family members who were missing during military service. In such cases, the families suspected that the disappeared person was in detention or had been killed for wanting to defect. One respondent reported:
My nephew is an officer in the Syrian Army. When they knew that he wanted to defect, they took him and we don't know anything about him. He is 22 years old.

Similarly, known defectors were taken and disappeared. As noted by a respondent from Homs:

A man from my neighborhood defected. I saw him from my house as he was taken. Since then, no one knows where he is. We think he was killed. This happened a year ago [in Mar. 2012].

There were second-hand reports of women who disappeared after being arrested arbitrarily by Syrian Security. These cases were rarely coded for the purpose of the quantitative survey because they were not witnessed and not reported to have occurred within the same household.⁷⁰

iv. Willful or Arbitrary Killings

Multiple sources of international law prohibit willful or arbitrary killings. For further international legal background on willful or arbitrary killings, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

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<th>Willful or arbitrary killing is defined as:</th>
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<td>Any deprivation of the life of a civilian or person hors de combat perpetrated by an agent of the state; or any other person acting under Government authority or with its complicity, tolerance, or acquiescence; and perpetrated without due judicial process.⁷¹</td>
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Respondents to this survey bore witness to executions of family members and neighbors, sniper attacks on civilians and on persons attempting to rescue the wounded, as well as multiple attacks on unarmed protestors. These accounts evince the deliberate targeting of civilians and persons hors de combat. There were also multiple accounts of deaths of family members while in the custody of Syrian Government Forces. Willful killings of persons hors de combat constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, potentially giving rise to individual criminal responsibility, and are considered war crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Civilian deaths resulting from bombardment by Syrian Government Forces, particularly by air, were also reported by survey respondents and are discussed in Section 4(B)(vii), Bombardment of Civilian Objects.

Respondents reported 59 incidents of arbitrary or willful killing of members of their own household by Syrian Government Forces or affiliated groups. Of these 59 incidents, the highest numbers were reported in Homs and Dar’a governorates (25 incidents reported in Homs and 22 in Dar’a). Respondents also reported witnessing a further 299 incidents of killings of persons not of the same household who were also believed to be non-combatants. These incidents frequently involved multiple victims. A killing was witnessed when the respondent saw or heard the incident that led to the killing; seeing the body of a dead person or persons was not a “witnessed” event.
a. Executions

Several respondents reported witnessing summary executions of groups of men after arbitrary arrests. Typically, witnesses would see the men taken away and then hear gunfire or find the bodies of the arrestees later the same day. Executions by shooting were common, and many bodies were found having been burned, though it was not clear whether burning was the cause of death.

A 26-year-old male respondent provided the following eyewitness account of a mass execution. This incident occurred during a ten-day siege on a village in Dar’a in August 2012.

On the first day of Ramadan, there were 23 men hiding in the basement. At 10:30 p.m., I realized that I needed to bring my cell phone from my house. On the way to my house, I encountered the Syrian Army in the street. They started shooting at me, and I ran away from them and hid [in a well]. They started looking for me and shouting. At one point, I got out of the well and was able to see them, but they were not able to see me. I saw that they had seized all the men that were in the basement. They had wrapped their hands with a white rope, pulled sweaters over their faces, and forced them to walk to the neighbor’s building. They led them into the neighbor’s house. I then heard three gunshots and loud voices. Then I heard rifle shots followed by silence. I went back to the well room, where I stayed until the evening. When the Syrian Army withdrew I heard the bombardments starting from the side where the battalions were. Then I went to the apartment where the men were led and saw 13 corpses. One of them was my wife’s brother. All those men were not wanted, and they were not rebels. Ten of the men were taken and detained for a period of one month. The men who died, who were killed, were between the ages of 30 and 60, and I knew them all.

A respondent provided the following eyewitness account of two executions, which occurred during a siege on a village in Rif Damashq in July 2012.

On the 11th morning of Ramadan, after morning prayers, [name of town] was surrounded by the Syrian Army, who rounded up people (mostly young males) in Al-Jalaa Street. Later, two of the people who had been arrested were interviewed by the Syrian media. They said that the others arrested with them were terrorists. As for the rest of them, they drove them 400 meters from my house, where they executed them. [On the same day,] six people were arrested and grouped together. The army surrounded them and started shooting in the air so that people would think there was a battle going on while other soldiers executed the six. The army left at 5:00 in the evening.

The same respondent, a Red Crescent volunteer, stated that he participated in the burials of the dead that day, which he estimated to be 115 people, including 41 people from the first incident reported.
A 29-year-old female respondent from Idlib provided the following account of the execution of several of her family members:

*On August 1, 2012, our village was bombarded; we all went to hide in the shelters. All of a sudden, we started hearing loud voices. Men were coming towards us. They started shooting towards our shelter. They got inside and they took my husband, his father (my father-in-law), and my brothers-in-law. My husband was 34 years old, his father was 65 years old, and his brothers were 32, 35, and 28 years old. They tied their hands and covered their faces. We started crying and they said to us, "Don't be afraid, don't cry. We just want to interrogate them and if we find them innocent, we will return them." They were receiving orders from a man who was standing outside. They took my husband, his brothers, and his father. They let them walk few meters, and then we heard gun shots. They shot all of them.*

The respondent indicated that the men who killed her husband were wearing khaki uniforms, helmets, and boots, and some of them wore a red insignia on their arms. The respondent identified the assailants as including, among others, members of the Presidential Guard.

A respondent from Homs reported witnessing execution-style killings.

*Seven people from our neighborhood were lined up against a wall and were shot by the Syrian Army.* (Homs, Apr. 2012)

Executions of individuals were also reported. One respondent from Rif Damashq reported seeing his neighbor standing against a wall and being “sprayed with bullets” by a group of men in civilian clothing, who the respondent identified as Shabiha. These men then took the victim’s car. A respondent from a village in Dar’a reported his brother’s killing.

*My brother was martyred. He was in front of the mosque and was shot six times in the head. They tied him to a car and dragged him all over [the village].* (Dar’a, Aug. 2012)

Targeting of children was also reported.

*I saw a young man being followed and shot at by the Syrian Security. His name was [not published], and he was 16 years old.* (Dar’a, no date specified).

### b. Armed Attacks on Protestors Resulting in Death

Multiple respondents reported witnessing attacks by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups on unarmed protestors around the country, many of them resulting in multiple killings.72

- [Security forces] blocked the road at a rally where we were demonstrating and started shooting randomly ... [from machine guns or technical fighting vehicles]. I saw many people die. Some died in my hands. I tried to take a few to the hospital, but we had to run. The coordinating
committee says 280 were killed. This was the “Children of Freedom” rally.73 (Hama, date not specified)74

- During the “Village Friday” demonstration, I saw about 18 people getting killed in front of me by regime army bullets. (Dar’a, Apr. 2011)

- There would be problems every Friday after prayers. There were demonstrations outside my place and I saw that there were men among the demonstrators who started shooting, and 17 men died. The men with guns had big beards, and they were next to my house. I heard them speaking a language that was not Arabic. [The respondent identified the perpetrators as Syrian Army and a group of men he believed were Iranians.] (Homs, Apr. 2011)

- In one demonstration I was in the regime security buses came with regime protection written on them. [The buses] were white, and known to be part of the regime. They surrounded us with the buses and shot tear gas and shot in the air. Then they started shooting haphazardly. There was one person who was beside me in the demonstration. He was hit and fell to the ground. He bled, and I ran away. I was 17 [years old], and I participated in the demonstration. (Homs, Apr. 2011)

- During a demonstration, the clashes started. [There was] shooting from the regime army, which caused the death and injury of about 70 people. I saw this and the evacuation of the dead and injured in a car for treatment. It was called “Children of Freedom” Friday. (Hama, date recollected as May 2011, actual date was June 3, 2011)75

- My neighbor [26 years old] got shot in the face by a machine gun when he was participating in a demonstration. He was not carrying any weapons. Intelligence shot him from the rooftop of the mosque. (Idlib, Aug. 2012)

Respondents reported that busloads of Shabiha and Syrian Security would descend on demonstrations and launch attacks together. A 30-year-old respondent described an incident during demonstrations in Rif Damashq.

I was shot on April 22, 2011, when I was participating in a demonstration against the regime. I was shot in my stomach (intestines and lower abdomen). The Security came in buses and started shooting at people. It was the Army sergeant who started the shooting. The Security officers were wearing civilian clothing, and the officers who were giving orders bore sergeant badges. They were armed with Kalashnikovs, tear gas, and hunting rifles.

Respondents also reported that SAA personnel killed demonstrators by tank fire. A respondent provided the following account of an incident in Rif Damashq.
In July 2011, during a funeral, there was a demonstration organized by the neighborhood families. The Army started shelling and shooting, and I saw one man [30 years old] and one child [12 years old] get killed, and five other victims [were] injured (three men and two children).

Respondents also reported sniper attacks on demonstrators (see Section 4(B)(iv)(c), Sniper Attacks, for further details). A 33-year-old respondent reported witnessing the following incident from his house in a neighborhood of Homs.

During the demonstrations, I saw someone get shot. My house is on the main road, behind the mosque. He was one of the demonstrators [about 27 years old], and he was throwing stones at the Security officers. I saw the Security officer who shot him, and I saw where he was hiding between two buildings. [The shooter] was wearing civilian clothes, and I recognized him from before when I saw him with Security, going through the street on a mission.

A respondent from Rif Damashq reported:

The Arab observers came to Arbin beginning in 2012; the Syrian Army members had hidden their arms so the locals saw [the observers’ presence] as an opportunity to demonstrate. Three men were shot by a sniper during the demonstration.

c. Sniper Attacks

Respondents from multiple governorates reported killings of civilians by snipers, many of whom they identified as SAA or Shabiha. Shootings by snipers also occurred during SAA raids on towns or after curfews, thus leading respondents to believe that the snipers in such cases were members or affiliates of the Syrian Government Forces. Shootings of children as well as adults were reported. Snipers were often positioned on the rooftops of public buildings, including schools, colleges, hospitals, and mosques. In addition to the deaths and injuries reported, the presence of snipers prevented residents from obtaining essential items and prevented the sick from reaching hospitals or otherwise receiving medical treatment.

Sniper attacks are, by their nature, difficult to substantiate, given that the location and source of the attack is intended to be concealed. In the accounts listed below, respondents provided details of the sniper’s appearance and location. There are many more accounts of sniper attacks provided by respondents, but we only included in this section those where a description of the perpetrator or the incident as a whole supported attribution to Syrian Government Forces or Affiliated Groups.

Respondents reported witnessing sniper attacks by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups around the country. A respondent from Dar’a recalled the following account from 2011:

A sniper from the Security Services, in his uniform, was situated at the post office. [He] shot two young men from our neighborhood in the street in front of me.
A respondent from a village in Rif Damashq witnessed snipers situated at a mosque opposite a FSA location in another mosque, as well as other locations in the area. She reported the following:

*My neighbor [30 years old] was shot by a sniper in [a square in my village] when she was out during the cease-fire between the FSA and SAA to check on her home. She brought back with her the gas butane [container] to fill up, but the Syrian Army was at the checkpoint outside and would take the butane, so she preferred to take it back into her house rather than to let the army take it. On the way back [from her second trip to her house], the cease-fire was over, and she was shot and died. One of the FSA tried to help her, but he was shot in the arm.*

A respondent from Hama reported the positioning of snipers on the rooftops of public buildings.

*Snipers were stationed on rooftops, including at the veterinary college and cultural center. They were wearing official military uniforms.*

There were accounts from Bayada, Homs, as well.

*On the way to Bayada, I saw a man get killed by a Syrian Army sniper while crossing the street. He fell and four hours passed before eventually they could take him [off the street].*

There were multiple reports of killings of children by snipers. While the attacks were alleged to be conducted by Syrian Armed Forces or affiliates, perpetrator descriptions were not provided. The following account is illustrative, though it should be noted that perpetrator identification does not meet the *reasonable belief* standard.

*I saw a child shot by a sniper in the chest as he was walking in the street. He fell in front of our house. We tried to rescue him, but the sniper shot him again in the chest, and he bled to death.* (Dar’a, May 2012)

Similarly, there were multiple reports of people being shot or killed by a sniper when going to the aid of others. The context suggests the killings were by sniper attack, although a description of the perpetrator was not provided. For example, a respondent from the city of Homs reported:

*I saw a man from my neighborhood trying to help the injured and dead. A sniper shot him in the legs and then in the chest and he died instantly.* (Homs, date not specified)

Sniper attacks were frequently reported by respondents as a reason for leaving, due to the perceived frequency and the indiscriminate nature of attacks.
d. Deaths in Custody

Several respondents who had been subject to detention reported witnessing the deaths of other detainees. Many gave the names of the deceased. A respondent detained in a Military Intelligence branch in Homs explained:

> I saw a man killed instantly by an interrogator breaking his neck because [the interrogator] asked him a question and he didn't answer. (Ramadan 2011)

The same respondent continued:

> As we were leaving the detention center, there were eight people who had died from torture. [They] had been thrown in the garbage bin.

Other respondents reported receiving the bodies of their dead relatives from detention facilities, and many were required to sign statements to the effect that the deceased was a “terrorist” in order to receive the body. Deaths reportedly occurred as a result of torture or lack of treatment for injuries. For example, a respondent [48 years old] who lived in Homs reported that:

> My nephew and all the youth went to demonstrate on a Friday in early incidents in September 2011. He was among the demonstrators, and there was shooting. He was injured in the abdomen. They could not reach the hospital because at Hajar Al-Abyad checkpoint he was taken by the Syrian Army, who claimed that they would treat him. The next day his death was announced, and they kept him for 15 to 20 days after his death, refusing to give back his body. A doctor friend of mine checked on my dead nephew when we received his body and said that he was not injured badly but [died because he] was not treated then.

Respondents reported the deaths while in custody of countless neighbors. Although these accounts include unwitnessed details, the fact that the neighbors were found dead or returned dead after being held in custody is indicative that the detaining government agencies bear responsibility. The following are several illustrative examples, from multiple locations, including Homs and Dar’a.

- **Syrian Security kidnapped our neighbor’s daughter [17 years old]. Three of her brothers were with the revolutionaries. They found out that she is their sister from a spy. They kidnapped her while she was leaving the house. They told her parents, “We will not return her until her brothers turn themselves in.” They tortured her to make her give up members of the FSA, and then they slaughtered her, cut her up, placed her body in a burlap bag, and threw it in front of her parent’s house. (July 2011)**

- **Our neighbor was arrested by the army and was taken from his house for three days. They released him, dead from torture. He was maimed, and his face was badly damaged and swollen. (Sept. 2011)**
• My uncle, an engineer, was detained by the Syrian Army because his son was an activist (photographing the demonstrations). At the time of the raid, they did not find his son so they took him. They detained him for ten days, and he died in detention. We were told by someone who was detained with him and released that my uncle died from torture. (June 2012)

There were also several reports of detainees who died after returning home as a result of injuries and trauma suffered during detention.

These willful killings of civilians and persons hors de combat, as reported by survey respondents and reasonably attributable to Syrian Government Forces and affiliated groups, violate customary international law and Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions. Killings of civilians and persons hors de combat also constitute the arbitrary deprivation of life in violation of international human rights law.

v. Beatings and Threats of Violence

All prisoners of war, civilians, and persons hors de combat are entitled to humane treatment under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Humane treatment is not specifically defined in customary international humanitarian law, but beatings are addressed in the contexts of prohibitions against corporal punishment, torture, acts of terror, or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. For further international legal background on beatings and humane treatment, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

Beatings and threats of violence by Syrian Government Forces and their affiliates appear to have been perpetrated to intimidate, humiliate, and spread fear among the civilian population. The preceding subsections 4(B)(i)-(iv) detail beatings by Syrian Armed Forces and their affiliates in the context of arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, arbitrary killings, and home raids. However, beatings were also reported to have occurred in a range of other contexts, including at checkpoints, on the street during raids of villages and towns, and at demonstrations. The examples set forth below are indicative of the incidents that multiple respondents witnessed and experienced. A total of 217 incidents of beating were reportedly witnessed by respondents or experienced by members of their households. Respondents reported the highest number of incidents in Homs (97) and Dar’a (68). This number may be under-reported because beatings were often overlooked by respondents as a distinct category of harm.

A 30-year-old female respondent from the Governorate of Dar’a witnessed a group of 12 high school students being ordered down from a bus, beaten, and subsequently arrested at a checkpoint on August 16, 2012. The respondent identified the attackers in this case as SAA since the incident occurred at an SAA checkpoint. However, the description, that of masked men with ribbons on their arms, suggests that they were more likely to be Syrian Security personnel. The respondent stated that she recognized a couple of the students as her neighbors.

They crossed a Syrian Army checkpoint, and [uniformed men] made them get down from the bus, lie on the ground, and then they started beating them. A couple of [the
students] were angry and started asking why they were being beaten; the Syrian Army arrested them and put them on the bus and they disappeared.

The following incident reportedly occurred in Al-Midan, Damascus.

When security forces entered the neighborhood where we lived, my eldest son [19 years old] went outside instead of staying in the house. That’s when security forces captured my son and started beating him, using their rifles, and they insulted him. [This occurred] in the middle of the street. After seeing our identification, they released my son.

The respondent explained that there were six or seven men, and two of them did the beating. He said that the insults were against “mothers and wives.” He indicated that the security forces had red, yellow, and white ribbons on their shoulders.

A 26-year-old respondent gave the following account of his beating at the hands of the SAA. The incident occurred in a town in Dar’a in July 2012. The respondent had been hiding in a friend’s house there during a six-day siege of the area.

They [the SAA] found me. They took my clothes off and left me in my underwear. There were about 30 of them. They made me go down on my knees. They had tanks. I told them I have no knowledge of anything. They beat me on my head and my stomach with thick, black electric cables. My aunt lives on that street and she was informed of what was happening. She came running and begged them to stop. They asked her who she was and she said that she was my aunt. They asked her whether she knew anything, or anyone who belonged to the Free Army, and she said no. A general took my cell phone and talked on his walkie-talkie, saying I have [name of respondent]. They came back and said, “There is nothing on you.” [The general] told my aunt that she looks like his mother; this is why he let me go free.

A respondent reported an incident at a checkpoint where her husband was beaten.

My husband was detained by the Syrian Army at the checkpoint near our home as he went to buy milk for our young son. For three hours, they beat him with sticks, belts, and by striking his face.

A 19-year-old male reported being arrested and beaten because he was carrying a picture of an outspoken Sunni cleric Adnan Al-Arour.

I was arrested at the checkpoint because I was carrying a picture of Al-Arour. In September 2011, I was arrested for a whole day, while being beaten up and insulted. They took my cell phone and money during my arrest, and then they released me after taking 3,000 Syrian Pounds [approximately 44 US Dollars at the time of the incident].
Respondents reported attacks and beatings of demonstrators, although beatings may have been under-reported as respondents were more focused on arrests and killings. One respondent described witnessing a beating in Damascus during a protest.

*I personally saw people participating in demonstrations being beaten and tortured (six or seven people beating one person).*

According to respondents, children were also subjected to beatings by SAA personnel. The following incident reportedly occurred in Dar’a in March 2011.

*I saw our neighbor (13 years old) as he was leaving his house to [visit] his next-door neighbor after curfew. Soldiers arrested him and took off all his clothes, except his underwear, and then tied him to the tree and beat him using sticks from the tree.*

Threats of violence, on their own or alongside other acts reported here, were widespread. 118 respondents reported threats of violence by Syrian Government Forces and affiliates as a reason for leaving (this refers to specific threats not general threats of violence) and a further 33 reported threats of violence in the context of harms to a person in their household. Sexual threats were separately reported – 21 respondents reported sexual threats to themselves or a member of their household. Sexual threats are a form of sexual violence (see Section 4(G), Sexual and Gender-Based Violence).

These accounts, together with other accounts in this report, suggest that beatings and threats of violence were committed by Syrian Government Forces with the purpose of, *inter alia*, spreading terror among the civilian population, potentially in violation of Additional Protocol II. Beatings also appear to have been used as a form of corporal punishment against the civilian population in violation of international humanitarian law. As noted in other parts of this report, the nature and severity of beatings also rise to the level of torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

### vi. Home Raids

International humanitarian law and international human rights law prohibit raids on private dwellings (referred to in this report as “home raids”) when such acts violate the right to privacy, as set forth below. Home raids frequently go hand in hand with other unlawful acts, including the unlawful appropriation of property, and may even rise to the level of pillage. For further discussion, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

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<th>The right to privacy is violated by:</th>
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<td>• Arbitrary or unlawful interference with a person’s privacy, family, home or correspondence; or</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unlawful attacks on a person’s honor and reputation.</td>
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Unlawful raids on private dwellings by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups are a distinct area of concern in this report because of the high rate at which they were reported to occur, and because of the way in which they were perpetrated; home raids, and the threat of such raids instilled
fear among respondents to this survey and prompted many to leave their homes. A violation of civilians’ privacy rights, home raids were also accompanied by a range of other violations including beatings, theft, property destruction, and threats of violence including sexual threats. Children were reported to have suffered particular trauma as a result of personally experiencing the invasion of their harms by armed men, witnessing the beating of their parents and other family members, and in some cases, being themselves subjected to threats and beatings, and in many cases.

The incidence of home raids cannot be quantified in a single figure. Instead, the reporting of home raids across a range of reporting categories can be summarized as follows:

- 497 respondents reported that home raids were a “reason for leaving” Syria. This number reflects the fact that respondents frequently reported multiple raids on their homes.
- Respondents reported 140 incidents of home raids related to a personal harm such as a beating, the arrest of a family member, or other trauma.
- Respondents reported 17 incidents of home raids leading to loss or destruction of personal property (although differences in coding meant that some respondents reported the home raid and the loss separately).
- An additional 23 home raids were reported as witnessed; however, this number appears to be under-reported as respondents also frequently reported that raids on their homes occurred in the context of raids on the entire neighborhood.

Overall, it is believed that home raids may have been under-reported because respondents may not have reported a raid when it did not result in harm to them or a member of their family, and because respondents tended not to report violations when they became accustomed to such practices.

Home raids were reportedly conducted by SAA and/or Syrian Security, frequently in the company of Shabiha. Several respondents also reported that Syrian Government Forces were sometimes accompanied by non-Arabic speaking or “non-Syrian” personnel. See further discussion in Section 4(D), Foreigners.

In no instance did a respondent report that Syrian Government Forces presented a search warrant prior to entering his or her home. The perpetrators were reportedly always armed.

As to why such raids were occurring, in some reported cases, home raids were conducted for the purpose of arresting targeted individuals, such as suspected members of an armed opposition group, individuals identified as having participated in demonstrations, and those reported to be providing medical assistance to fighters and injured civilians.

_I had a brother in the Syrian Army. He defected, and the army pursued him. After that there were raids on the house without permission; they broke the doors down._
However, many respondents reported that home raids were conducted across entire neighborhoods over the course of a day or days, and were not conducted based on specific information about a particular household. Some respondents perceived that they were targeted because their area was considered to be supporting Anti-Regime Armed Groups (typically FSA). Also see Section 4(I), Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup, for further analysis of harms according to the religious or ethnic profile of respondents.

One respondent gave an account of a home raid by Syrian Security while her husband was not home. Security remained in her home for two nights. She and her family left their home within a week of the incident.

*I have four sons and two daughters. They are: 13, 12, ten, nine, five, and four years old. FSA had soldiers living in [name of village]. A few days before December 1 [2012], Security people came to our house. The whole neighborhood had left except for my family. When soldiers came to my house, they asked, “Who is the head of the household?” I replied, “Me, my mother-in-law, and kids are here. My husband is at work.” The soldiers asked me what my husband did, and I answered that he was a blacksmith. A huge man who was the leader ... said they were coming back in one hour, and if there was anyone else there, they would shoot them all. I told him that “I have daughters.” The soldiers were Syrian, spoke the same dialect. They wore black uniforms, camouflage uniforms, and helmets. Their weapons were Russian. Green tanks were parked [outside]; there were approximately 17 tanks in my neighborhood. There were other vehicles, e.g., Toyota pickup trucks. Security slept in my house for two nights on the ground floor; we slept on the upper floor. Security left the house at noon. While leaving, they said, “We are going to make this town shake.”*

Respondents frequently reported that members of their household were arrested during home raids and subsequently detained (as noted in Section 4(B)(i), Arbitrary Arrest and Detention). It was common for respondents to experience multiple raids, and they commonly cited fear of the recurrence of home raids as a reason for leaving.

For example, a 28-year-old female respondent from a neighborhood in Homs gave the following first-hand account of successive raids of her home by the SAA between November and December of 2011.

*There were sudden house searches [perpetrated] in a terrifying manner. [The SAA] broke through the building entrance door and then asked me to open the door. I opened, and they asked me why I didn’t open quickly. Then they asked my husband about the nature of his work. They asked him to open the basement. They checked his ID, and then left. [Another time,] there was heavy shooting outside during the search. Three men with rifles came into the house with their weapons pointed at us. One stood at the door, and two others searched. They even had us put up the ladder to search the attic. They asked us if we had a field hospital. They searched the basement too, and even the garbage can to see if there was medical waste, like needles. They were wearing uniforms and*
helmets, and they were from the SAA. All of them were over 35 years old. This was different from the first search where the soldiers were young and their weapons weren’t pointed at anyone.

Respondents reported a range of abuses during home raids. The following examples are illustrative.

a. Physical Violence During Home Raids

Multiple respondents reported that a member of their household, usually a male, was beaten during a home raid. According to one respondent:

*They beat my father very severely in front of me during a raid, on the pretext that my brother defected from the army. My father told them to call and check that his son did not defect. They verified that he is still with the army, and they left him and went.* (Homs)

There were also many reports of children being beaten during raids. Another respondent reported:

*I saw a raid on my step-brother’s house – next to my house. I was watching from the balcony. The Syrian Army soldiers invaded the house and started beating my family members - my step-brother and his two 15-year-old sons - because they took time to open the doors. [The soldiers] destroyed personal items in the house, and they were asking whether FSA members were hiding there.* (Dar’a)

Many respondents reported that they or members of their household suffered trauma from the experience of having armed men forcibly enter their home and harass and physically abusing family members. Beatings and other forms of abuse often occurred in the presence of the entire family, including small children. A 35-year-old respondent from a village in Dar’a reported:

*They raided our home and hit my husband. They demolished the outer wall of the house. They hit my husband using sticks. They were eight of [them], Bashar’s security officers. They broke [my husband’s] hand, and they hit his back in front of the children. They hit my son when he wanted to help his father. They told [my son], “Stay away or we will shoot you.” They also used foul language. They cut off the electricity and harassed me. When I was defending my husband, they pulled me back, and scared me with their leering looks. [I was afraid] of rape. One of the soldiers said to my children, “Go out and leave your mother.” The soldiers stayed by my home until my neighbor came out and said, “What do you want from this woman? Go away.”*
b. Psychological Intimidation During Home Raids

Multiple respondents reported being shouted at and insulted by SAA soldiers, Security, and Shabiha during raids of their homes. The perpetrators also frequently pointed their weapons at occupants. Several respondents reported that perpetrators conducted strip searches to provoke, insult, or humiliate them. Several respondents reported that the SAA and Security questioned and intimidated minors. The following incident, reported by a 48-year-old female respondent from the city of Homs, allegedly occurred in early February 2012.

About 20 people [identified by respondent as SAA, wearing camouflage uniforms, helmets, boots, and olive green] raided the house around 10:00 a.m. They entered every room in groups of four to five. They asked us to turn on all the lights. At 6:00 a.m., they cut the landline and [took our] cell phone. They messed up the entire house and stole money, a cell phone, and a camera. This scared my daughter. They also opened our laptop and checked it, but we are peaceful and not involved in anything. The house raid happened in the presence of my daughters [seven years old and three and a half years old]. And they also interrogated my younger daughter by asking her, “Tell us what you say?” [They wanted to see if she would say pro-regime or anti-regime slogans.] They also asked “What channel do your parents watch?” The reason they gave [for the house raid] is that they were searching for rebels. But if this is the case, then why did they mess up the house, beds, and closets?

Another respondent from a neighborhood in the city of Homs reported the following incidents from October 2011.

Our home was raided twice. The first time, three Shabiha came in. They did not speak Arabic and had beards; they were dressed in half civilian, half military clothes. A group of soldiers came in (there were four of them) and they placed a bomb on the couch. Another soldier came and said to my uncle, “Give me some money [and] we will leave you.” So he gave them 25,000 [Syrian] Pounds [approximately 500 US Dollars at the time of the incident]. Two days later, the house was raided, and they went in to the kitchen and took the food. One soldier was watching the television.

A Palestinian respondent reported specific threats during a raid on her home.

They called us "traitors" and "spies," and asked "Why are you here among Al-Houranieen?" (Meaning, among terrorists and implying that they are the reason for the Syrian revolution.) They threatened that “if any revolutionary enters your house, or if a bullet leaves your house, we will burn the house while you are inside it.”
c. SGBV and Sexual Intimidation of Women and Girls During Home Raids

Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups often used explicit and vulgar language as an intimidation tactic during home raids. Details on the international law sources that prohibit such conduct can be found in Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

For example, respondents reported Syrian soldiers forcing them to remove their hijabs (scarves covering the wearers’ head and chest):

My husband was 32 years old when he was shot by a sniper during a clash between the Syrian Army and the rebels. My house was raided three times by three soldiers during the mourning period. They were looking for my husband, and they were not convinced that he was dead. During the third and last raid, I fled to the neighbor’s house. My face was covered; they forced me to take off my hijab. They were afraid that I had explosives under my clothes. They threatened to kill me if I did not take off my hijab.

Sexual intimidation of women and girls by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups is discussed more broadly in Section 4(G), Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; additionally, the text box below highlights several more of the many reported incidents of harassment.

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**Examples of Accounts of SGBV Perpetrated by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups During Home Raids**

There were 87 accounts of sexual humiliation or threats by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups during home raids. Examples include:

- *During the [house] raid, they used to threaten us with rape and murder if we did not bring out the weapons.* (Idlib, date not specified)

- *My daughter-in-law was pregnant, and a soldier put his hand on her belly to see if she was hiding something there.* (Homs, date not specified)

- *One of the soldiers pushed my uncle’s wife to a corner of the room and asked her to unbutton her dress, and lift it and show her body.* (Homs, May 2012)

- *They [uniformed Syrian Government Forces] raided the village and entered my house in June 2012 about a month before I left. They were disrespectful and they used foul language. They looted a lot of our household items and they searched my private clothes. They were telling each other to rape me and my daughters.* (Dar’a, June 2012)

- *[Name], the officer in charge of the military security, was threatening to rape women when raiding homes if the youth didn’t hand themselves over.* (Dar’a, fled July 2012)
d. Destruction and Theft of Personal Property During Home Raids

Respondents reported the theft of a broad range of household items during home raids. Small valuables such as computers, money, and cell phones were frequently reported as taken, but some respondents even reported the theft of large household items. A respondent from a town in Dar’a reported:

*I fled [in June 2012] because my son was wanted for military conscription, and he doesn’t want to be in an army fighting against the innocent. My house was raided five times. During the raids, the contents of the house were looted. They stole the blankets, towels, gold, money, and even cookies were taken. They stole the washing machine, television set, and refrigerator.*

As referenced in several of the reports above, there were also multiple accounts of the destruction of household property. A respondent from another town in Dar’a reported a series of raids from the early days of the uprising.

*My house was raided in March 2011 by about ten soldiers. They tried to steal the electrical motorcycles (four of them). There was a difference in the soldiers’ dialects: Alawite, [from] Aleppo, and Druze. They were wearing military olive green uniforms, different types of shoes (black sneakers, white sneakers, and normal shoes), as well as military helmets. [The respondent identified them as Syrian Security.] There were other raids after the first one. In the second raid, they searched for terrorists. Seven soldiers entered wearing military uniforms, then [they] stole the electrical motorcycles. My four sons and husband were taken outside the house for interrogation for two hours. A soldier asked them, “Are you Palestinians?” Then they were released. The third time, it was a group of seven soldiers or Shabiha wearing black clothing, with Alawite accents, and they vandalized the house.*

Overall, survey respondents generally reported that home raids conducted by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups were arbitrary and conducted in a manner that amounted to harassment. Thus, these raids violated Article 17 of the ICCPR. Moreover, respondents widely reported the appropriation of personal property during home raids. This type of appropriation constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law.

As noted above, respondents repeatedly and consistently reported that Syrian Government Forces beat unarmed civilians in their homes; threatened and intimidated family members, including minors; and behaved in a manner intended to dishonor female members of the household and their families. The nature, frequency and extent of home raids, which reportedly occurred across multiple governorates and entire towns and villages, demonstrate that raids were widespread and systematic among the population surveyed. The question of whether home raids targeted certain subgroups in particular is discussed in Section 4(I), Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup.
vii. Bombardment of Civilian Objects

A brief overview of the obligations of parties to the Syrian conflict regarding bombardment and other forms of attack is set forth in the following text box and elaborated in Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties must respect the following limitations regarding bombardment and other forms of attack:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Parties must distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parties must take all feasible precautions to spare the civilian population and civilian objects during military operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited, including those attacks which:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- are not directed at a specific military objective;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- employ a method or means of combat with effects that cannot be limited as required by international humanitarian law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attacks that treat clearly separate and distinct military objectives as one single military objective are prohibited. I.e., an attack cannot be waged against an entire town in order to target a distinct military objective within it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attacks must be proportional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ordering the displacement of civilian populations for reasons related to the conflict is prohibited. Displacement is only allowable where security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bombardment and other types of attacks against the following targets are prohibited:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Civilians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Civilian objects, such as civilian areas, towns, cities, villages, residential areas, dwellings, buildings and houses and schools, civilian means of transportation, places of worship, or the natural environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural property, such as buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, charitable purposes, or historic monuments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humanitarian relief and medical objects, including medical units and transports, hospitals, neutral zones, or safety zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installation and supplies, and irrigation works.(^{81})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondent accounts indicate that Syrian Government Forces have failed to distinguish between civilian and military objects and between civilians and combatants in violation of customary international law. Respondents consistently indicated that entire neighborhoods, villages, and towns were bombarded by Syrian Government Forces.

Conclusions as to the objective of Syrian Government Forces’ bombardment cannot be derived solely from respondent accounts. However, their accounts indicate that attacks by Syrian Government Forces were “indiscriminate” in that, in some cases, they were not directed at a specific military objective, or they employed methods that could not be specifically directed at or limited to a military objective. Attacks by air were particularly notable because of the Syrian Government Forces’ failure to limit the impact of aerial attacks to military objects and because of their lack of proportionality. The bombardment of Yarmouk Camp (discussed below) provides a particularly cogent example of intensive aerial bombardment on a densely populated neighborhood for the purpose of attacking Anti-Regime Armed Groups in a manner that was not, according to respondents, limited to military objectives.

The scale and extent of attacks also suggests that bombardment may have been “directed against” the civilian population. Respondents reported attacks on cultural property, including mosques, and on humanitarian relief objects, such as hospitals and medical centers. These attacks also led to significant loss of civilian life. Although this study does not purport to draw conclusions regarding criminal responsibility, it is important to note that attacks directed against civilian populations and targeting protected objects constitute war crimes in the context of non-international armed conflict.

The consequences of Syrian Government Forces bombardment of densely populated areas included the following:

- Respondents reported 52 incidents of aerial bombardment resulting in harm to a person, either a member of their own household (13 incidents) or a witnessed harm (39 incidents). Respondents also reported that other forms of bombardment, including shelling from tanks and rocket attacks, resulted in physical harm to members of their household (ten incidents) or resulted in death or injury to persons outside their household, as witnessed by the respondent (39 incidents). Some reported incidents resulted in multiple harms, including multiple deaths, as elaborated below.

- Respondents reported 21 incidents of aerial bombardment resulting in damage and destruction to their own homes, businesses, or personal property; and they reported 48 incidents of property loss or damage as a result of other forms of bombardment by Syrian Government Forces.

- Respondents also reported varying levels of destruction of towns and villages as a result of Syrian Government Forces bombardment, recounting 82 incidents of aerial bombardment and 85 incidents involving shelling and rocket attacks. In the case of attacks on towns and villages, an “incident” typically referred to a period of bombardment, such as a week or a month of intermittent attacks, rather than a single bombardment.
Respondents typically experienced repeated bombings. Early in the conflict, respondents primarily experienced rocket attacks; subsequently these escalated into aerial bombardment. Aerial bombardment was frequently cited by survey respondents as a reason for leaving Syria. Many respondents believed that bombardment by Syrian Government Forces could be attributed to the presence of Anti-Regime Armed Groups, but they also described the attacks as targeting locations where Anti-Regime Armed Groups were not present, including densely populated areas. Further, the attacks struck protected objects, such as mosques, hospitals, and food stores. Respondents frequently described bombardment by Syrian Government Forces as “indiscriminate.”

The quantitative data and the narrative examples included below only represent reports which met the reasonable belief standard. A significant number of respondent accounts of alleged rocket attacks by the Syrian Armed Forces did not include an account of the perpetrator responsible, or did not include sufficient identifying details to code the perpetrator. However, interviewers could sometimes rely on circumstantial evidence to support an identification of the SAA as the attacker (for example, when a nearby military target was known or when the attack was launched in unison with a series of other identifiable attacks on the area by the Syrian Armed Forces and affiliates, and it was reasonable to believe that there was no other attacker). Where respondents witnessed an aerial attack, it was presumed that the perpetrator was the Syrian Arab Air Forces, as no Anti-Regime Armed Groups have yet demonstrated the capacity to conduct aerial attacks. Observing just the aftermath of a bombardment (e.g., resulting damage to property, corpses, injured persons, and burials) was not considered to be a witnessed incident, though many respondents made such observations.

Respondents recounted aerial bombardment and ground-based bombardments which can reasonably be attributed to Syrian Government Forces and which appear to have violated a range of principles of international humanitarian law.

Multiple respondents reported that entire villages and neighborhoods were targeted based on the suspected presence in the area of Anti-Regime Armed Groups. Some respondents observed that even where Anti-Regime Armed Groups were launching attacks from a specific, identifiable location, such as a school, the bombardment would target other areas.

A respondent from a town in Idlib reported several incidents. The first reportedly occurred in July 2011.

*A bomb fell outside my cousin’s house. People went outside to check the area. Then an artillery shell fell outside in the same location where people were gathering.*

The respondent reported that seven people, including at least one child, were killed in the attack. He believed that the reason for the attack was because people from that area were participating in demonstrations, and he expressed the view that there “were no weapons with the people” or any opposition forces at that location at the time of the bombardment. The respondent stated that he saw that the attack was launched near the Khan Sheikhoun reservoir. The same respondent reported an aerial attack on the center of Idlib in February 2012.
The victims included six dead and 80 injured, mostly children. Four cluster bomb dispensers were dropped from MiGs. I witnessed the planes and the bombardment and saw the unexploded bomblets. They weigh five kilograms each, about the size of a small water bottle. The bombardment was focused on the center of the city, the commercial district.

The respondent reported that he witnessed an attack on a field hospital in Idlib Governorate later the same year, again from SAA forces that he believed were stationed near the Khan Sheikhoun reservoir.

It occurred around Ramadan, [Aug. to Sept. 2012]. Artillery bombardment fell on a rebel field hospital, but the people present in the hospital were civilians.

Other respondents also believed that there were no anti-regime activities or groups in their towns or villages, and yet they still came under attack.

Respondents from all but a few cities, towns, and villages covered in this study reported witnessing civilian deaths and injuries due to bombardment by Syrian Armed Forces. Because survey respondents were usually reporting deaths occurring in the vicinity of their homes and workplaces, they were able to credibly distinguish civilian victims from combatants. Respondents frequently reported that children and women were killed and injured during bombardments. This was supported by testimony from medical personnel who were interviewed as part of the respondent pool of this study; they reported that the majority of persons they treated were women and children.

- My neighbor’s house was bombed by a plane, and she died with her two sons, a daughter, and a son-in-law. (Idlib, no date specified)

- I saw five children [aged between four and seven] playing outside their home. They were killed by [barrel bombs] dropped by the planes on the first day [they flew] in. (Dar’a, May 5, 2012)

- We were bombed by tanks and artillery all the time. This happened seven months ago. My daughter [two and a half years old] was injured from aerial attacks. I was with my daughter at home when aerial bombing destroyed my house and injured my daughter in the leg. (Dar’a, Sept. 2012)

- In my village, one month before I left [I witnessed] aerial bombing. A 37-year-old man and his three nephews were killed [in the incident], and one nephew was injured. [In a] second incident, [there were] injuries and a house was destroyed, 100 meters away from my house. [It was a] military plane. Five people were injured: one 45-year-old man, two children, and two women in their thirties. (Idlib, Oct. 2012)

- I witnessed aerial bombing of buildings occupied by refugees [internally displaced persons]. I personally picked up three children that were killed by the bombing. The children were playing outside at the time. There were only civilians living in the buildings. This occurred on a short visit back to my home from [host country]. The same attack also hit a diesel station five minutes after the attack that killed the children. (Rif Damascus, Feb. 15, 2013)
As discussed, respondents frequently reported that attacks targeted protected sites and adjoining areas, including hospitals, schools, mosques, fuel sources, and food sources such as bakeries and crops. Respondents from Yarmouk Camp in Damascus consistently reported that aerial and rocket attacks launched by Syrian Government Forces in mid-December 2012 targeted such sites. For example, a 44-year-old male respondent reported:

_Aerial bombing targeted Abdel Kader Mosque on Safad Street and the Kamelia cookie factory on Palestine Street. Both attacks occurred at 11:00 a.m._

A medical center worker, also from Yarmouk Camp, reported that medical centers were targeted during aerial bombardments, in addition to the Abdel Kader mosque.

_There was a bombing attack, and most hospitals and medical centers were targeted. I know that because I was working in a medical center. The casualties included a minimum of 50 people killed; one of them [was] a female teacher and also three to six children. We treated them._

Another respondent from Yarmouk Camp reported:

_[The] location was 400 meters from my house. [The] perpetrator [was the] Syrian Government Forces [aerial bombardment from a MiG plane]. The Abdel Kader Mosque contained approximately 3,000 displaced people from other parts of Syria. [On December 16, 2012] at 12:30 p.m., we heard that the FSA was inside the camp and was going to attack the SAA in a municipality building. At 1:00 p.m., I heard the MiG airplane from my house. It hit the mosque, then the school [on the second pass]. I participated in the removal of the victims and the injured people: 167 people were identified; 122 people were unidentified. [There were a total of] 289 victims [of all ages and both genders]._

A respondent from a neighborhood in Homs reported:

_Infrastructure was targeted by the regime army .... We were deprived of electricity and other facilities due to this targeted attack on infrastructure. At the end of 2011, Al-Barr mosque was shelled, generating minor destruction. The neighborhood was partially destroyed. The medical center was shelled._

A respondent from Arbin in Rif Damashq reported the following attacks and resulting destruction:

_Shelling, aerial bombing, burning, [and] partial destruction of the village. We witnessed shelling of a school and a mosque (I can't recall their names)._ 

When asked if the attacks were targeting particular people or groups, most respondents characterized the attacks as “random” or “indiscriminate.” But, some respondents perceived the attacks as targeting areas that might be characterized as “Sunni,” or conversely, identified non-Sunni areas as having been spared. See further discussion in Section 4(I), Analysis by and Perceptions by Subgroup. Some
respondents also perceived that their area or village was attacked because it had been the site of demonstrations, because of some presence of Anti-Regime Armed Groups in the area, or because the area was under the control of an Anti-Regime Armed Group.

Regarding the types of bombs used in aerial attacks, respondents identified and described the bombs as cluster bombs, thermobaric bombs (a bomb that sucks the air, crushing houses; also known as fuel-air explosives) and al-barmils (barrel bombs).

The fear of bombing, in particular, the fear of aerial bombardment, was one of the reasons that refugees cited most for leaving their homes and leaving Syria. As previously mentioned, in some instances (particularly those involving respondents’ first-hand accounts of aerial bombardment) bombings could be directly attributed to Syrian Government Forces. For example, a 29-year-old woman from a village in Idlib explained:

Every week there were protests on Friday so bombings occurred once a week, usually on Friday. But then bombardment became continuous and every day. I used to go to the fields every day and hide, and come back in the afternoon [when the bombardment stopped]. The weather was cold, and my children started getting sick as I did this for around one month. The village was bombarded by [barrel bombs] from [MiG] planes, around 12-15 bombs per day [in October 2012]. Some houses were destroyed and crops were burned. The crops, wheat and grains, were dry and easily caught fire, [which] spread in the fields. We were very scared, so I called my husband, who is working in [host country], and asked him to take us there.

A respondent from an area on the outskirts of Damascus explained:

We left due to the siege, as the city was occupied by the army and people were not allowed to move around. [In July 2012,] the city was constantly shelled and aerially bombed. Because the city is close to a brigade the shelling continued from tanks, rocket launchers, and mortars. A tank stationed on a high mountain close to the city targeted cars and everything that moved in the streets. We feared the raids that houses nearby were subject to. I feared for my children … There was an intense presence of soldiers inside the Yarmouk Camp areas, which is close to my neighborhood.

A 25-year-old respondent from a village in Dar’a explained how she and her sons felt “fear and terror” from repeated aerial bombardment and shelling, including one incident where she was injured, leading to her decision to leave.

Shelling came from the municipality playing field, from tanks and rocket launchers, and airplanes, intermittently, if there were revolutionaries [in the area] or shots fired from the city. My house was hit by a rocket and mortar shell, and it was partially destroyed. Then the roof and its front facing facades were hit, and I was slightly hit by shrapnel in my face. Another shell landed in front of the house. My neighbor’s house [was hit by] four rockets and was completely destroyed while her parents were inside, but nobody
was injured. All these incidents caused me and my children to feel terrorized. (Dar’a, Aug.-Dec. 2012)

Respondents from Yarmouk Camp reported that camp residents fled in large numbers due to the increasing severity of air strikes when Anti-Regime Armed Groups entered the camp. One respondent recounted:

We left mostly because of the bombardment (bombs, rockets). Before, the Free Syrian Army was not present inside the Yarmouk Camp, just in the areas around the camp. During that time, the SAA bombed the FSA positions outside the camp. Even then bombs would fall inside Yarmouk Camp [at a rate of] 20 bombs per day. Then the FSA entered the camp on December 11, 2012. That’s when the aerial bombing began. At 1:00 p.m., an alert was given to evacuate the camp, and then the bombing began. More than 100 bombs fell during that day.

See Annex (D), Illustrative Responses: Reasons for Leaving Syria, for several additional accounts of the bombardment affecting Yarmouk Camp.

Respondents also gave consistent accounts of the escalation in attacks by Syrian Government Forces. A respondent from a village in Dar’a who fled in March 2012 explained:

There was random and heavy shelling using tanks at the beginning, then it became ... airplanes intermittently. Many houses were destroyed while their inhabitants were inside.

viii. Destruction and Theft of Property

Destruction and theft of property are prohibited under customary international law. Further, parties to a conflict have an obligation to distinguish between civilian and military objects and are generally prohibited from attacking civilians and civilian areas. For further discussion, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict (discussed under Home Raids and Bombardment of Civilian Objects).

Respondents consistently reported destruction and theft of property, including their homes, businesses, and personal property. According to respondents, theft and destruction occurred in the form of targeted attacks on civilians and their homes and as a result of indiscriminate bombardment of densely populated areas (discussed in Section 4(B)(vii).

Graphic 3 of the report shows the frequency of reports of destruction of and theft from homes and businesses by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. In summary:

- Respondents reported 283 events in which their homes were damaged or destroyed by an attack which could reasonably be attributed to Syrian Government Forces.
Respondents also reported 29 incidents of damage to or destruction of businesses, with the highest incident number of these incidents reported in Homs (16) and in Dar’a (8) and 69 incidents of destruction of property or food stores by Syrian Government Forces.

Respondents also attributed 163 incidents of theft of property by Syrian Government Forces, with the highest incidents in Homs (76) and in Dar’a (55).

This quantitative data, and the narrative examples provided below, only include reported incidents that could be reasonably believed to have been caused by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. Most responses provided by respondents regarding loss of property could not be attributed to a specific party or did not meet the reasonable belief standard because in the majority of cases, respondents did not witness the incident that led to their property being taken or destroyed, or could not detail the source of the attack. Many learned of the damage or destruction to their homes and property from relatives or neighbors who stayed behind. Some reported seeing their destroyed homes in news footage on television or the internet.

Respondents reported that their homes were destroyed by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups by way of aerial bombardment, ground-launched attacks, and the burning of houses. Respondents also reported extensive theft and destruction of property during home raids.

Respondents from various governorates gave accounts of destruction to their homes.

- **My house was destroyed by aerial bombardment from three rockets.** (Dar’a, July 2012)

- **I was sleeping with my son. A tank bombarded the neighborhood. The window [near] where I was sleeping was hit and broken. When I heard the sound of the rocket, I [escaped] with my son. The glass fell in the bed. The second day, I heard the sound of the plane, so I ran away from the house, and on the road I saw that my house was destroyed by aerial bombing. We saw that all the houses were destroyed.** (Homs, Aug. 2012)

- **We were bombed by tanks and artillery all the time. This happened seven months ago. I was with my daughter at home when aerial bombing destroyed my house and injured my daughter in the leg. My house was burned [from the aerial bombardment], and days later it collapsed.** (Dar’a, Aug. 2012)

- **I have a rented house. It was bombed by plane, and I lost everything inside.** (Idlib, Oct. 2012)

Survey respondents widely reported the deliberate burning of houses, although their accounts suggest that they rarely witnessed the burning. Quantitative data regarding the burning of houses was not captured in the report because arson was not identified as a distinct form of attack in the survey coding. However, respondents’ repeated references to burning as a cause of destruction suggests that the practice occurred. For example, multiple respondents reported Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups burning houses.
• The entire house, two stories, burned. [The respondent stated this was part of a raid on Al-Bayada during which many homes were burned.] (Homs, Mar. 2012)

• [Army and Shabiha] raided our house in April 2012; they burned it. The house was totally empty during the raid. (Homs, Mar. and Apr. 2012)

Respondents from other regions also reported arson. A respondent from Dar’a recounted the siege in which her home was burned.

Eastern Karak fell under siege two days after the revolutionaries left it. Then the Syrian Army raided the area, looted house furniture, and burnt houses with a material that burnt furniture and totally dissolved it (total destruction). (Dar’a, Oct. 2012)

Another respondent from Dar’a reported:

The Syrian Army raided my home and burned the bedroom and kitchen completely.
(Dar’a, Mar. 2012)

Destruction of agriculture and livestock was also reported. A respondent from a town in Homs described his experience:

[There was] bombardment at us, directly at us; there is no house! The shelling was non-stop and is still going on until now. We left before our house was bombed. But our land was burned by SAA. They were in front of us; we saw them. We were surrounded by mortars and rockets of military points: Al-Dahr Center, Abouzeid, Ras Al-Nabeli and Jabal Al-Sayed. [There was] burning of olive fields by bombs, all [was] burnt.

Additionally, a respondent from a town in Idlib reported that grain and wheat crops were burned in fires started by bombs dropped from MiG planes in March 2013.

153 respondents reported theft of personal property by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. This included the theft of small items, such as computers, cell phones, and money; as well as large items, such as televisions, stereos, refrigerators, furniture, and appliances, and anything else of value in the home. Thefts frequently occurred during home raids as previously noted (see also Section 4(B)(vi), Home Raids). A respondent from a town in Dar’a, described in detail how large and small items were stolen by the SAA during home raids:

Everything was looted: blankets, household and electrical appliances. The food supplies were ruined by mixing them together; the lentils with the oil, with the sugar, with the rice. The propane gas tanks were [stolen], in addition to the electrical lights charger. They stole money, no matter how small the amount was. They took cooking pots with food inside ... They stole the washing machine, television set, and refrigerator.

A respondent from Dar’a reported that many of the items in her home, including the TV, radios, and cameras, were stolen during a home raid by uniformed personnel in September 2012. Another
respondent from Dar’a reported that SAA personnel in military uniform “stole my husband’s motorcycle in front of our eyes.” A respondent from an area in Homs reported that early in the conflict, the SAA and Shabiha were registering the houses in her district and came to her house once per week for a period of time. She said that “every time they entered the house, we were robbed (of money if we had any) and anything they wanted.” Additionally, a respondent from Idlib reported that Syrian Government Forces stole money from her home during the same raid that led to the arrest and execution of her husband, and his brothers, and his father, in August 2012.

There were also several reports of vehicle theft. For example, a respondent from Rif Damashq reported that in July 2012, members of the Presidential Guard took her husband’s car at gunpoint. A respondent from the city of Homs reported that Air Force Intelligence stole his new taxi in April 2011.

Respondents mentioned that stolen goods are sold in what has become known as the “Sunni Market.”

- They collected the furniture of the homes of the Sunnis in a market called the Sunni Market. They sell the furniture there at the lowest prices. (Homs)

- A friend of my son is an Alawite. He said the things belonging to the Sunnis are sold for cheap prices in the Alawite area near our area. (Homs)

- They have special market to sell items and furniture looted from Sunni houses. (Idlib)

Deliberate damage to property was also widely reported, particularly by respondents from Dar’a. For example:

- A respondent from a village in Dar’a reported that his home was raided twice by uniformed SAA personnel and that in the course of the raids they broke furniture and valuable tools, in addition to stealing personal property.

- A respondent from another village in Dar’a reported that his home was raided twice, in September and November 2011, by soldiers in military uniform and Shabiha in civilian clothing. In addition to stealing a cell phone and 10,000 Syrian Pounds [approximately 200 US Dollars at the time of the incident], he recounted that “they broke the TV and the glass, the fridge, and all the furniture.”

- Describing a particular SAA battalion, a respondent from a village in Dar’a reported: “They burned my motorcycle. The entire house was destroyed. They moved from room to room, and they destroyed the whole house.” (Aug. or Sept. 2012)

- Multiple respondents from villages in Dar’a reported Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups burning motorcycles. As one respondent explained: “They gathered all the electric motorcycles [ten of them] from all the houses, and they completely burned them all because they said the FSA was using them to run away.” (Feb. 2012)
• In another example, a woman from the city of Homs reported that Syrian Government Forces (reportedly Security and Army) raided her house on April 5, 2011 and “stole [three] motorcycles, put them in the street, and ran them over with a tank.”

Destruction and looting of businesses was also reported.

• My washing machine shop on [name of street] was destroyed by the army using tanks and then bulldozers. I saw the destruction. (Location not specified, Mar. 2012)

• I had a sandwich shop that was completely destroyed by the aerial bombing. (Homs, Feb. 2012)

• My carpentry shop was shelled by the Military College. (Homs, Mar. 2012)

• I had an electronics store which was completely looted by the army. (Dar’a, Feb. 2012)

• On the same day that the Syrian [Military] Intelligence raided our house, they broke down the doors of the [four] shops my family owned and looted their contents. (Homs, Aug. 2011)

• I had a car repair shop and ... goods [worth] 800,000 Syrian [Pounds, approximately 15,900 US Dollars at the time of the incident] ... stolen by the Syrian Army. (May 2012)

ix. Children: Deliberate Targeting and the Failure to Protect

Multiple sources of international law require state and non-state actors to protect children during a conflict. The text below provides an overview of the protections mandated for children, who are defined under the CRC as persons under the age of 18. For further international legal background on the protection of children during conflict, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special protections to be afforded to children in conflict:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All feasible measures must be taken to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• protection from all forms of sexual violence;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• separation from adults while deprived of liberty unless housed with members of their own family;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• access to education, food, and health care;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evacuation from areas of combat for safety purposes; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reunification of unaccompanied children with their families.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Children in Syria have not been spared from harm, and in many cases appear to have been directly targeted by Syrian Government Forces in acts of killing, detention, beating, intimidation, and
interrogation. Children have also suffered heavily as victims of bombardments on civilian areas. In addition, respondents repeatedly identified the particular trauma suffered by children as witnesses to conflict, and many identified this as their reason for leaving.\(^{89}\)

In accordance with the survey methodology, minors were excluded from the respondent pool. However, respondent accounts of same household and witnessed incidents demonstrate a range of harms suffered by children within the survey population. Respondents reported seeing minors being arrested and detained. One respondent reported a conversation with a 14-year-old detainee who was held in the same cell as him in the Air Force Intelligence Branch at Mezza Airport.

> The kid was taken away for five days, and then he came back. I asked him, “Where did you go?” He said, “They gathered me with the rest of the children for five days in security buses so that the Arab League investigators would not see us, so that they look like they don’t arrest children.”

For further examples, see Section 4(B)(i), Arbitrary Arrest and Detention.

Many respondents reported sniper attacks on children, although as previously noted, perpetrator details were not available.

Respondents also reported attacks and killings of minors by Syrian Government Forces during demonstrations and at checkpoints. For example:

- I saw from my balcony that people who were gathering on Fridays were shot at by the army and by security people. I saw a child being killed; his name was [not published]. He was eight years old and [there was also] another child. Both were accompanying their fathers in a demonstration against the regime. (Damascus, date not specified)

- There was ongoing shelling from the Syrian Army. We came into [host country by] crossing the river. We went into the mountains and crossed the river. We were shot at from the Syrian Army checkpoint at the river side. My granddaughter [six years old] fell in the water, and people came to rescue her from drowning. The kids were terrorized, still until now. My granddaughter saw an Army officer, and while crying told him, "Please, uncle, don’t shoot at us." Another girl [eight years old] with the refugees who were crossing with us was shot in her right shoulder. I heard the shooting and saw the shot girl. She was immediately taken to the hospital. (Homs, Winter 2012)

Respondents repeatedly stated that children suffered from trauma when Syrian Armed Forces entered their homes and beat and intimidated their parents and in some cases also the children themselves. See Section 4(B)(vi), Home Raids, for examples of beating of minors.

A respondent reported an incident involving her 12-year-old son in Homs.

> He was traumatized, and this lasted for many hours, when a soldier during the raid interrogated him. He asked: “Do you like the president?” [My son] said, “Not so much.”
The soldier went to my other son [32 years old] and accused him of teaching him to talk this way.

There were also reports of children being intimidated and questioned at checkpoints, as recounted by a respondent from Homs:

I was in a taxi passing the checkpoint. The soldier asked for ID and asked me, “Where are you from? Are you participating in demonstrations? Is your husband participating in demonstrations?” Then he turned to my five-year-old son who was playing with a toy helicopter and asked him, “Where is your ID?” My son answered “I don’t have ID, I have this” [pointing to the toy helicopter]. He grabbed him by the arm and said, “Move, get down; we’ll take you to prison and beat you.”

A respondent from Dar’a reported two separate occasions when her son was beaten.

During another raid on my house, more than 15 soldiers from Syrian Security entered wearing official green uniforms. One of the soldiers asked my son, [who is] 17 years old, to hand over his book which has pictures of Bashar, thinking that the pictures would be defaced, but he found that the book was clean and he beat my son. He slapped him on the face, punched him in the abdomen, and kicked him. This is because [my son] lied to the officer and said that he didn’t have the book. The soldier threatened to kill my son if I did not step away from him. The second time, he was beaten at a Syrian Security checkpoint when he was coming back from school, after being forced to shout, “God, Syria, and Bashar only.” He was beaten with a leather belt and a club, and suffered bruises.

C. Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups

The conflict in Syria has seen a proliferation of armed groups acting against the regime and in many cases against each other. These groups vary in ideology, political affiliation, tactics, and to some extent in appearance, and from our interviews we have determined that the groups are often difficult for the civilian population to distinguish from each other. Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, whether affiliated with the FSA or a jihadist or other group, are therefore discussed together for the purposes of this study’s analysis. This enables a comparison between the nature and severity of reported abuses committed by Anti-Regime Armed Groups as a whole and violations committed by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. Where incidents can be attributed to a particular armed group, it is noted in the narrative. In order to draw more specific conclusions about the perpetrator group in this dataset, it would be necessary for analysts to combine the findings in this report with information available from other sources detailing the activities and locations of the groups in question.

Respondent reports reveal divisions among Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and a lack of command and control even among Affiliated Groups (such as different brigades under the umbrella of the FSA). For
example, in some reported cases, respondents were warned or assisted by one group or individuals from within a militia in relation to the acts of another group or of their own colleagues.

Details and examples of reported abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups are set forth below.

i. Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives

Intentionally locating and launching military operations out of residential areas constitutes multiple violations of international law, as set forth below. For further international legal background on the violations that may result from engaging in conflict in civilian areas, including violations that may result from occupying private homes during a conflict, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violations that may result from engaging in conflict in civilian areas:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Failure to avoid, to the extent feasible, locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Failure to provide protection to the civilian population by taking all feasible precautions against the dangers arising from military operations, including removal of civilian persons and objects whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forced displacement of civilian populations for reasons related to the conflict, except where the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Taking of hostages. Seizure or detention of a person (the hostage) and threatening to kill, to injure or to continue to detain the hostage with the intention to compel a third party to do or to abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use of human shields, involving intentional co-location of military objectives and civilians or persons hors de combat with specific intent of trying to prevent the targeting of those military objectives.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Although the practice was not quantified, multiple respondents reported that Anti-Regime Armed Groups launched operations out of residential areas and used residential buildings to shield themselves from SAA bombardment.

Information regarding Anti-Regime Armed Groups conducting military objectives out of residential and other densely populated areas was recorded in two main contexts:

1. Respondents reported that Anti-Regime Armed Groups, typically identified as FSA, were operating out of their residential area as a means of “defending” or “liberating” the area. Anti-Regime Armed Groups’ military activity reported ranged from the use of small weapons to the use of artillery.

2. Respondents reported that Anti-Regime Armed Groups had forcibly entered and occupied their residential area. They stated that death and/or displacement of residents and damage and
destruction of buildings occurred as a result of ensuing “retaliatory” attacks by the Syrian Government or battles between the Syrian Government Forces and Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

The practice of positioning military objectives within residential and other densely populated areas was not identified as an incident for the purpose of the quantitative analysis in this study, but is discussed in detail, based on respondent narratives, below. Wrongdoing is difficult to assess as the rules of customary international law require a determination of the feasibility of locating military operations elsewhere, the feasibility of relocating civilian populations, and the purpose of the military objective. However, overall, reports by respondents to this survey demonstrate that the positioning of military objectives in certain populated areas exposed the civilian population to a heightened risk of harm, contributed to conditions that led to the displacement of civilian populations, and may therefore constitute a violation of international humanitarian law. Moreover, based on respondent accounts, the positioning of military objectives in populated areas arguably constituted the use of human shields. Many civilian injuries and deaths were reported as a result of fighting between both sides and as a result of Syrian Government Forces bombardment on populated areas where Anti-Regime Armed Groups positioned military objectives.

The incidents leading up to the Syrian Government Forces attacks on Yarmouk Camp are illustrative of this point. Respondents from Yarmouk Camp in the outer suburbs of Damascus consistently reported that several Anti-Regime Armed Groups entered the camp in mid-December 2012 and asserted control over the camp and several points of entry. In identifying the groups, respondents referred variously to Jabhat Al-Nusra and “jihadist” groups as well as FSA or brigades within the FSA. According to respondents, these groups’ operations led to fighting inside the camp between Anti-Regime Armed Groups (including Palestinian factions) and pro-regime Palestinian factions. The SAA set up a checkpoint outside the entrance to the camp and strictly controlled the entry and exit of people and goods; many respondents reported that food and services were cut off as a result. On December 16, 2012, Syrian Government Forces launched a combined ground and air attack on Yarmouk Camp. Many civilian deaths were reported, primarily from aerial bombings, and tens of thousands of Palestinian residents of the camp fled. First-hand reports by survey respondents from Yarmouk Camp suggest that the conduct of military operations by Anti-Regime Armed Groups inside the Camp endangered residents and contributed to massive displacement. As one respondent explained:

*Until December 2012, the situation at the camp was relatively quiet. Local Palestinian forces inside the camps established “popular committees” to protect the camp from both sides, the FSA and the Syrian Army. However, several opposition armed groups, including a Palestinian group, FSA, Jabhat Al-Nusra, and others, infiltrated the camp while the Syrian Government Forces established a checkpoint outside the camp on one of the entrances, in the Al-Zahra area. The FSA controlled the three other main entrances.*
Due to the presence of multiple armed groups and the fact that the opposition was not unified, the security level deteriorated and tension escalated, which led to loss of control by the popular committees. ... The intensity of ground bombing escalated, and the first aerial bombing occurred on December 16, 2012. (Male, 44)

The vast majority of respondents from Yarmouk Camp pointed to the same series of incidents in mid-December 2012 as leading them to leave. As another respondent explained:

*I came to the camp at 5:00 p.m. [on December 17, 2012]. All the people were leaving. I saw around 100 armed men. Fighting was happening while I was passing on the road. I couldn’t reach my home except at great risk; it was a horrible night. We left the camp in the early morning. The armed men were opposition groups – Jabhat Al-Nusra, Free Syrian Army. I don’t know why this happened. They were all from outside the camp. There were masked men. There were Syrians wearing ordinary clothes. They had sniper rifles and B7s and other weapons.* (Male, 28)

The majority of respondents from the strategic city of Al-Qusayr, in Homs, also reported that they felt compelled to leave their homes in the first year of the uprising due to the presence of Anti-Regime Armed Groups in residential areas. Multiple respondents surveyed in this study who reported leaving during that period expressed the view that their homes were selected by Anti-Regime Armed Groups so that the Syrian Government Forces would attack them. As one respondent explained:

*The armed persons were shelling the SAA, and the SAA was bombing back. The armed persons were one-quarter from Al-Qusayr and three-quarters from other villages and foreigners. I have not seen the foreigners, but the people who told me are trusted. We used to stay at home; we stayed for one year ... We risked going out to get supplies. We had hope that it would end, but the bombardment started to target the houses because they [rebels] used to hide and attack SAA from among houses.* (Female, 25)

Respondents provided accounts from around the country of how their homes were damaged, destroyed, or exposed to the risk of bombardment by the positioning of Anti-Regime Armed Groups near their homes.

A respondent from Rif Damashq explained:

*I own an apartment and it was damaged by bombing when we were running away from the city. ... We saw how the bomb fell down on our apartment near the kitchen [causing a fire]. The Syrian Army [did it] because the FSA was in front of our apartment.* (Male, 44, Nov. 2012)

Several respondents from Aleppo attributed problems in their areas to the entry of Anti-Regime Armed Groups. As one respondent stated:
We were living in harmony; no problems. The State was good to us; we had no problem with the state. When the FSA entered the city, problems started. The FSA took a school close to us and occupied it. There was a police station close to us, and clashes started. The FSA started killing the police to try to take the station. There was lots of shooting. We were very scared because my house was close to the station. I had my own car. FSA took it and mounted a Dushka .50 caliber [DShK .50 caliber anti-aircraft machine gun] on the back ... I left because of the FSA. (Male, 46, fled Nov. 2012)

A respondent from Hasakah Governorate reported that his home was destroyed by aerial bombardment when anti-aircraft missiles were positioned at a nearby school. The school also suffered damage.

A respondent from Raqqa reported:

In the beginning of 2012, the FSA entered Raqqa, and there was lots of fighting with the regime. We could not move at night; it was not safe. Raqqa was controlled by the FSA. The Syrian Army started to bomb the FSA by plane. We escaped to relatives in the suburbs. [In May 2012] we came back and found our house hit by a bomb. I don’t know what kind of bomb it was. We felt scared and [felt] that it was unsafe to stay, so we left. (Male, 36)

A contrasting scenario demonstrates how difficult it can be to make an assessment of military necessity or feasibility. A respondent from Homs reported that many defectors came from the Al-Rastan area in that city; the area was subject to invasion by Syrian Security and the Syrian Government Forces before being “liberated” by the FSA. The respondent explained:

80% of the town residents were displaced. Al-Rastan was a battlefield. Three tanks were blown up by FSA, which caused destruction. The FSA asked all people to leave, and then they placed explosives to ambush the SAA when they entered. [This occurred in January 2012.] Almost every house was hit by rockets and shooting. But after the FSA took Al-Rastan in February 2012, the SAA started bombing. (Male, 25)

Many respondents from various locations in Syria reported that their houses were occupied by Anti-Regime Armed Groups. For a more detailed explanation of how this practice violates international law, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict. This typically occurred after the respondents had fled and was rarely witnessed by a respondent. Respondents were informed by others, such as neighbors and relatives, that their houses were occupied. Anti-Regime Armed Groups’ occupation of houses in Syria is a violation of international humanitarian law. It has also resulted in related human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations, including the forced displacement of civilians and the exposure of
populated areas to military attacks, resulting in loss of life and loss of property. The occupation of houses was not coded as a separate incident and therefore, we cannot quantify the frequency of this event. The following remarks related to reports of occupation of houses should be noted, although they are not based on witnessed events:

- Many respondents who reported that their homes were occupied perceived that the purpose of the occupation of their homes was to use them as a military base so that the SAA would target them.

- Those who fled and subsequently returned to their homes typically reported that they had been looted while vacated. Looting of homes was not recorded as attributable to an Anti-Regime Armed Group unless the looting was witnessed. See Section 4(C)(iv), Other Human Rights Abuses.

- In many cases, houses were destroyed when they were occupied by Anti-Regime Armed Groups. Destruction was attributed to the acts of the occupants, to the battles that took place between Syrian Government Forces and Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and to bombardment by the Syrian Government Forces who were targeting the armed groups in the area.

In particular, respondents from Al-Qusayr consistently reported that their homes were occupied by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, since the area came under the control of brigades associated with the FSA in 2011. The respondents, having left their homes, could rarely give first-hand accounts; however, their testimonies were based on accounts from family members and others who remained in Al-Qusayr. In the following instance, the respondent’s uncle witnessed the occupation of the respondent’s house, and the respondent returned home after the Syrian government reclaimed control of Al-Qusayr.

_The [name of family associated with armed group] came into our house eight months ago. They destroyed the walls inside the house, making holes in them to be able to move in between the houses. Also, the ceiling was destroyed. Appliances were looted. Pictures of Jesus and the Virgin were on the floor, and the Bible was ripped apart and thrown outside the house. Also, I found two Qurans. I saw all this when I went back to check the house two weeks ago [in the beginning of July 2013]._ (Male, 19)

The respondent’s uncle also reported that armed groups put explosives in buildings and houses when the SAA was coming into the area; however, there were no first-hand accounts of this practice from survey respondents.

Similar incidents were reported in other areas and governorates, based on second-hand accounts. For example, a respondent from a town in Idlib Governorate reported that she and her family had been asked to leave the area by the SAA. When she later returned to retrieve personal documents, the house had been looted and partially destroyed. Her neighbors informed her that her home had been occupied by “armed groups.” Some respondents alleged that Anti-Regime Armed Groups coerced civilians to leave their homes, although those accounts were not first-hand. For example, a 44-year-old female respondent from the city of Aleppo reported that an armed group (allegedly FSA) entered her area and
asked people to leave because they planned to bomb the area in order to take it from the government. She was told by others that the armed group threatened to bomb even if the residents did not evacuate. A 38-year-old male respondent from Hasakah City gave a second-hand account that his father-in-law left home at the request of the FSA because they promised to give him back his house after two months. His father-in-law left Syria a few days before the interview.

ii. Killing of Civilians

Civilians are protected against attack, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities. Moreover, attacks and violence resulting in death of civilians implicate the blanket prohibition on murder of civilians and persons hors de combat, solidified in numerous conventions and tribunal statutes. For further international legal background on the unlawful killing of civilians, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

Respondent accounts of the killing of civilian indicate violations of the prohibition on direct attacks on non-combatants as well as the failure to distinguish between civilian and military objects. Based on other reporting and for reasons stated in the report (for further details see Section 6, Challenges and Limitations) killings and other attacks by Anti-Regime Armed Groups are likely under-reported. Respondents reported 14 incidents of killings of civilians which could be attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups based on first-hand or same household accounts. Many respondents attributed the bombardment of residential areas, and resulting civilian deaths, to Anti-Regime Armed Groups. However, respondent accounts of the source of a rocket attack could rarely be relied on (regarding allegations against Syrian Government Forces or Anti-Regime Armed Groups), and so specific responsibility for deaths by bombardment, other than aerial bombardment, was difficult to quantify. Unattributed acts of harm caused to civilians are discussed in Section 4(F), Unattributed Incidents.

Civilian deaths were also reported as a result of ground assaults, such as shootings in residential areas or at check points. For example, a resident of Yarmouk Camp reported that he witnessed a shooting attack on a busy street that resulted in the deaths of four civilians on December 11, 2012. He stated that the shooting continued for 15 minutes, and he described it as part of the group’s take-over of the camp. Based on his description of the perpetrators, however, it is not possible to attribute the attack to a particular group.

Another respondent described civilian casualties at an attack at a checkpoint. The respondent described the perpetrators as having a machine gun mounted on a pick-up truck bearing the flag of the revolution. He stated that two of the attackers were wearing black.

We were riding in a van, going to another area in Damascus. We stopped at an SAA checkpoint, and suddenly the FSA attacked the checkpoint and shooting started. All three soldiers on the checkpoint were shot in front of us, and we almost got killed. We saw civilians who like us were at the checkpoint get shot. We got out of the van and started running, and we took a taxi back home. (Male, 28)
Respondents also gave accounts of what appeared to be targeted killings. These incidents are considered to be of the “same household” for the purposes of this study, as the two families now reside together in the host country. The reported incidents occurred in September 2011.

My first cousin was close to Security (Intelligence). The terrorists asked him to surrender to them. He refused. They agreed that he would leave [city of residence], but he was shot before he had the chance to do so. They put the Al-Farouk Brigade flag over his body so his parents would know who killed him, and they threatened his family. My other cousin, who was with his brother, was beaten and tortured. They threatened him that his family was next. (Male, 24)

Killings were reported to have occurred after abductions and/or torture. For example, a respondent gave an account of the abduction of five relatives in December 2012. He reported that two were released, and three were killed. He believed that at least one of the victims was targeted for refusing to cooperate with armed groups, as he would not supply them with materials related to his work that would have enabled them to fabricate explosives. See Section (iii) below for further details on this subject.

iii. Abductions and Related Abuses

Abductions by non-state actors violate or threaten to violate several rules of international humanitarian law; according to the UN Human Rights Committee, abductions by non-state actors may also violate international human rights law.

Respondents reported four instances wherein a member of their household was abducted by a member of an Anti-Regime Armed Group, or the respondent witnessed the abduction(s). As noted below, at least one of the reported abductions involved multiple abductees. Multiple respondents also reported threats of abduction that could be attributed to an Anti-Regime Armed Group; however, threats of abduction were not coded as a distinct category and so cannot be quantified. Many more respondents, particularly those from neighborhoods or villages with large minority populations or wealthy neighborhoods, reported knowing of incidents of abduction (or kidnapping for ransom) in their neighborhoods and pointed to kidnappings and abductions as their principal reason for leaving. Those cases are not identified here, either because they are not proximate accounts, or because the respondent did not believe the abductions were attributable to an Anti-Regime Armed Group, or because it was not possible to meet the reasonable belief standard in attributing responsibility to a particular group. Kidnappings for ransom are discussed in more detail under Section 4(F)(vi), Kidnapping for Ransom.

Where abductions or threats of abduction could reasonably be attributed to an Anti-Regime Armed Group, they appeared to illustrate targeting of particular categories of civilians, including professionals (notably, doctors), the wealthy, and government employees or people with some other affiliation to the government.
The following incident was reported by the wife of an abductee. According to the respondent, the perpetrators identified themselves as Jabhat Al-Nusra, and that group was otherwise active in the area. Certain details have been left out, including the location and the nature of the abductee’s work, to protect the respondent and abductee’s identities.

My husband was a government employee. When he finished [work] in [name of area] and was getting into his car along with a colleague, he was stopped by three men who stepped down from a SUV. One took his car and the other two, armed with rifles, abducted them. They drove for 15 minutes. He suspected that they took him and his colleague to [location]. Because he was blindfolded he couldn’t tell where, but it seemed like [type of location]. They interrogated him, asking questions about his job with the government. Then his colleague, who was a Muslim, started talking to the kidnappers and asked them to set my husband free because he doesn’t have any money and because we have a sick child. He also told them that my husband had open heart surgery and he has no relation to politics. They scolded his colleague saying, “You are a Muslim and you are defending a Christian?” But he replied, saying that he knows my husband very well and that he is an ordinary man with no affiliations. Then they started interrogating my husband about [his work]. Then they asked him to choose how he would like to die. My husband started crying and begged them not to kill him. Then they said that when the Sheikh comes, he will decide what to do with him. After the Sheikh came he started trying to convert my husband to Islam by showing him how Islam is better than Christianity. He said that the “Bible is Haram and Mohamad is the last prophet.” But then [the Sheikh] decided to release him in exchange for a sum of money. After 20 days, we paid 1 million [Syrian Pounds; approximately 7,100 US Dollars as of the date of publication of this report]. Many other colleagues at his work were also taken, and they never came back. (Female, 53)

In another example, the respondent, a medical professional, had treated FSA casualties and was therefore known to Anti-Regime Armed Groups. These incidents occurred in January 2013. Further demographic details have been omitted to protect the respondent’s identity.

I was accused of doing [medical procedures] that were against Islamic rules. Some of my friends in the FSA and Jabhat Al-Nusra and Kurdish leaders warned me that they [later identified as a member of Liwaa Al-Tawheed, a FSA Brigade during the period of the incident] were coming to kill me. I was sleeping in the hospital at the time [due to previous kidnapping threats]. The Kurdish PKK helped me escape to [host country]. The man who was going to catch me [name omitted] had come to identify me. I was told he would come back to arrest and kill me, so I escaped the same night. There was a suggestion from the FSA, through my friends, that if I give 10 million Syrian Pounds and five machine guns, they would leave me alone.
An engineer similarly reported receiving direct threats followed by a warning to leave. These incidents occurred in March 2012. Further demographic details have been left out to protect the respondent’s identity.

One person from the rebels, who I knew before from the village, came to tell me that the rebels want to kidnap me along with the equipment that I use for my job, in order to use it against the army. I refused. After a while, someone close to the rebels came to my home and advised me to evacuate the women and children as soon as possible. That’s when I decided to leave.

Several respondents reported Anti-Regime Armed Groups conducting searches at checkpoints for the purpose of capturing military personnel and Alawites. One respondent reported the abduction of five men at a checkpoint operated by an Anti-Regime Armed Group.

During a journey by bus on our way to Beirut, there were many checkpoints for both the [SAA] and the FSA. At one of the checkpoints, three FSA men went on the bus; one stood at the door and the other two came inside, checking IDs. They were carrying weapons. There were another 12 to 14 armed men at the checkpoint and two pick-up trucks carrying long weapons. They were all wearing civilian clothing. The armed men asked for the women to cover their hair, and then they asked for those men who are 30 years old or less to step down from the bus. Five men went down and they [the armed men] asked the bus to leave. The five people detained were Christian Assyrians. (Male, 38)

Reports of killings also indicated the use of abduction and torture. Respondents reported 12 cases of torture by Anti-Regime Armed Groups. In the following account, the respondent did not assign responsibility to a particular group, but described the perpetrators as “armed rebels.”

My brother was in the Syrian Military Police. In July 2012, he was abducted from [an area in the city of Homs]. He was detained and tortured for 8 days. He was beaten and whipped, and there were knife cuts and cigarette burns on his body. They injected him with diesel and he had to be treated for a whole year in a military hospital. When they abducted my brother, there were three other people with him. Two were killed, and the third was the person who delivered them to the rebels.

iv. Other Human Rights Abuses

First-hand reports of unauthorized searches as well as theft and intimidation indicate unlawful acts committed by Anti-Regime Armed Groups as they asserted control over civilian areas. Even where international law may fall short of providing protections for civilians against certain acts by non-state actors, such as home raids, it is important to make reference to such acts as corresponding acts of Syrian Government Forces have been elaborated in this report.

The following incident reportedly occurred in a village in Idlib Governorate, between August 19 and 21 (Eid Al-Fitr), 2012.
The FSA took control of the area, and they were searching houses. They came in and identified themselves. They searched the house and left. They were searching for weapons in the houses because [the village] was Ba’athist and there were Shabiha in the area. (Female, 30)

There were three reported incidents of Anti-Regime Armed Groups entering respondents’ homes while they were present. Many more respondents alleged that Anti-Regime Armed Groups entered their homes after they vacated them, but those accounts were not witnessed.

The appropriation of civilian property by a non-state armed group constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law (See Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict for further details). There were seven reported incidents of theft attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

A respondent from Rif Damashq reported that he was forced, under the threat of death, to sign a sale contract transferring his land to members of the FSA in his area. The respondent knew the perpetrators and their affiliations due to former personal and professional relationships. He reported that other property, including a vehicle, was also taken.

The FSA took my farm in [Rif Damashq] and they forced me to sign a sale contract at the notary after they threatened me and told me if I don’t give them the farm they would kill me.

There were reports of theft and intimidation at checkpoints operated by Anti-Regime Armed Groups. The following incident in Deir Al-Zour reportedly occurred on May 22, 2013. The respondent identified the perpetrators as Jabhat-al Nusra on the basis that they were wearing headgear with the Jabhat Al-Nusra script. They were armed and in civilian clothing.

I was bringing my daughter and her children to [host country] and a checkpoint [guard] stopped me and took 3,000 Syrian Pounds [approximately 30 US Dollars at the time of the incident] from me. They asked everyone in the bus to pay 3,000 [Syrian Pounds] each or else they would search the bus. They said “You stand against the regime or pay money to be released.” (Male, 67)

Several respondents reported sectarian threats and intimidation at checkpoints. Reports of sectarian threats are further discussed in Section 4(I), Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup.

D. Foreigners

Respondents frequently reported incidents involving non-Syrians, whether acting in concert with Syrian Government Forces or as members of Anti-Regime Armed Groups. There were 59 reports wherein foreigners were identified as perpetrators in relation to categories of harm identified in this study.
i. Foreign Groups Affiliated with Syrian Government Forces

Respondents gave accounts implicating non-Syrians – typically Iranian and Lebanese – in home raids, attacks on demonstrators, killings, and sexual harassment.

There were multiple reports by respondents from Dar’a of foreigners participating in home raids with Syrian Government Forces. In some instances, respondents assessed that a person was a foreigner because he was speaking a foreign language, and in other cases because he was speaking broken or accented Arabic. Multiple respondents reported that foreign personnel were Iranian or Lebanese, and some respondents specifically alleged that personnel were affiliated with Hezbollah.

There were allegations of foreigners involved in attacks on demonstrators from early in the Syrian conflict. The following incident reportedly occurred in a town in Homs in April 2011 (on Easter Friday).

*On Friday, [like] all Fridays, after prayers there would be problems. There were demonstrations outside my place. I saw men among the demonstrators who started shooting, and 17 men died. The men with guns had big beards … I heard them speaking a language that was not Arabic.*

A respondent from a village in Dar’a reported that Shabiha and Syrian Security raided her home, accompanied by men in black with bands on their arms, who were speaking on wireless radios in a language other than Arabic. She described members of the group in general as large men, with beards, wearing green vests, and carrying knives on their legs. She explained:

*Strange people used to come and search our house. They had guns, and spoke a different language. I used to hide my son. They shot up our house.*

A respondent from another town in Dar’a reported that men, who she believed to be speaking Farsi, accompanied Shabiha on a raid in her town and on her home. The raid resulted in the arrest of many of the town’s young men, including her husband. She described the group:

*[They were wearing] white sports shoes. They carried sticks and [had] white armbands. They also had knives, Kalashnikovs, hats, and leather jackets. [They spoke] Iranian and Syrian. The Shiite Iranians had beards and white skin.*

A 22-year-old male from Dar’a reported that the Syrian Republican Guard and Iranian and Lebanese personnel raided his home. Among other details, he mentioned that groups appeared to be distinguished by the color of their armbands.

*The army raided our home three times in April 2012, and they searched it. The army had Iranians and Lebanese people among its ranks, and I recognized them from their accents.*
Similarly, another respondent from Dar’a described invasions on his home by joint forces who he identified as Iranian Revolutionary Guards wearing green arm bands, and Hezbollah soldiers wearing yellow arm bands. Another respondent from a town in Dar’a reported multiple raids after May 2011 by Syrian Security, in some cases with Iranian personnel, after his brother defected from the SAA. He gave the following description of the personnel he encountered.

[We were visited by] someone with a non-Syrian accent, wearing green military uniform (presumably an Iranian). The rest wore military uniforms and spoke with Syrian accents. The Iranian had a head band with Farsi writing on it.

A respondent from Hama reported two raids on her home in February 2012 by armed men speaking broken Arabic, who she believed to be Iranian. And, a female respondent from a town in Dar’a reported that a man she believed to be an Iranian officer, based on his uniform and appearance, was in charge during a raid on her home in July 2012. A respondent from Damascus believed that the officers who he saw giving orders to Shabiha during a raid on his home in September 2011 were foreigners (he alleged Iranian), because of their appearance and the fact that they did not speak in front of him. Other respondents from Dar’a gave similar accounts.

Foreign personnel were implicated in a reported execution in a neighborhood in Homs, according to the following account.

On March 16, 2012, the house where I was hiding, which belonged to my neighbors, was raided. About 10 soldiers came in, wearing military uniforms, some of them wearing black masks on their faces. The soldiers spoke with Alawite, Shiite, and Iranian accents. A soldier ordered me, my family members, and neighbors to separate the women from the children, and to line up the men against the wall. They detained my brother-in-law, neighbor, and my sister-in-law’s husband. They took them to an empty house in the same neighborhood and killed them with knives and long [needles]. I heard the sounds of the detainees being tortured. One of the soldiers asked for my husband’s identification and almost detained him, but let him go because he was a government employee.

The same respondent reported being sexually harassed by one of the foreign soldier.

One of the soldiers asked me in an Iranian accent, if I am married or a virgin. I answered, “I am married with children.” He leered at me, which was terrifying. A soldier told me, “Don’t be afraid. We are not terrorists. You are terrorists.”

Respondents also reported that foreigners were involved in interrogations during detentions by Syrian Government Forces. A respondent from Dar’a reported that her 19-year-old son was arrested while visiting the Passports Department to do some paperwork. He was detained for one day in July or August 2012, beaten and tortured, and then released on the condition that he spies for the regime. The respondent explained what her son told her.
He was interrogated. [They were] asking who he deals with, [whether] he has participated in demonstrations, and whether he belongs to any group. Some of [the perpetrators] were speaking to each other in a foreign language.

There were also multiple allegations of Iranian snipers; however, these were not supported with first-hand descriptions.

ii. Foreigners Participating in Anti-Regime Armed Groups

Multiple respondents reported that there were also non-Syrian members of Anti-Regime Armed Groups, but there were few first-hand accounts and no specific reports of harm.

There were multiple reports of foreigners involved in checkpoint searches. One respondent from Al-Qusayr stated:

While a friend and I were on our way to Souk Al-Gharbi [the western market] to get some food and vegetables in April 2011, some people stopped us and asked for our identity cards. We gave [the cards] to them. They were five individuals; three wore jalabiah [long tunics over pants], short white round hats on their heads, and black beards. Another two were from the village [dressed in civilian clothes]. The three men in the long tunics could not even read our identity cards; they were foreigners. The five men forced us to return back to our home and prevented us from [visiting the market].

A respondent from Hasakah reported that checkpoints were operated by foreigners under the leadership of an Afghani fighter.

[Name withheld] was with an armed group. All of them had long beards with no moustaches. They had black flags with the script “no God but Allah” [written on it] and they wore black head-bands with that script. I was told that [name withheld] is from Afghanistan, and they presented themselves as FSA. The regime shelled [our area], causing destruction, after these groups arrived. When I came back, I was stopped and asked my religion by these other groups at a checkpoint ... I replied saying, “I am Christian,” and that I had come to check on my house. Then, I was allowed to go forward.

There were also reports of checkpoints operated by foreigners in Yarmouk Camp, Damascus.

I saw some men wearing masks, and some without masks. They had beards and strange faces. [I knew that they were] foreigners because they did not speak Arabic and they wore Pakistani clothing. [The respondent described the pants they wore.] The checkpoint [was flying] the FSA flag, with the word “freedom” written on it. They just asked me for identification papers.

A medical doctor reported treating foreign fighters injured in attacks on Anti-Regime Armed Groups in his area, in July 2012.
As I was working in a hospital in the area ... I was treating injured fighters and injured civilians, I was treating foreigners, not only Syrians. I treated Chechens, Canadians, Lebanese, and Yemenis.

Although reports failed to allege specific harm, the prevalence of foreign fighters among Anti-Regime Armed Groups was repeatedly cited as a concern (further discussed in Section 4(I), Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup). Respondents from various locations expressed the view that foreigners were responsible for some of the worst atrocities occurring in their areas, and many respondents reported leaving out of fear when foreigners entered their towns and villages. The following accounts reflect the opinions of the respondents, but the atrocities referenced were not events that they personally witnessed.

- Opposition forces are attacking the Syrian Army and Alawites (even civilan Alawites). They are not yet systematically attacking Christians, but there have been some incidents, especially [involving] Jabhat Al-Nusra and foreign forces, of killing non-believers [non-Muslims]. (Aleppo, dates not specified)

- We were afraid from the shooting, the rockets, and especially from foreigners ([who had] long beards, rifles, and were tall and black); I think [they were] from Afghanistan and Pakistan. (Homs, fled Mar. 2012)

- During my stay in [Yarmouk] camp, I noticed and personally met foreign armed individuals, such as Ethiopians and Chechens. They were hired by both sides and were responsible for most of the atrocities that took place in the camp. (Yarmouk Camp, Dec. 2012).

- I was afraid of being killed. There were fighters coming to the village. At the beginning they were from the village; later I saw foreigners with beards, so as a Christian I felt afraid. First, I decided to send my family away (in July 2012). Then I left seven months ago. (Homs, fled Jan. 2013)

E. Other Armed Groups

The tables and graphs contained in this report include data for “unknown” perpetrator groups - which includes unknown assailants, unknown armed groups and criminal gangs – as well as “other armed groups”, i.e., armed groups who are not clearly affiliated either with Syrian Government Forces or with Anti-Regime Armed Groups, as defined in this report. See Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups, for some examples of other armed groups. However, only a few accounts were given regarding activities of “other” armed groups and do constitute a sufficient dataset to support separate analysis.

F. Unattributed Incidents

This section briefly elaborates on categories of incidents or types of harm for which responsibility was frequently unattributed. Incidents were unattributed for several reasons, including when:

- The respondent did not see the perpetrator or the source of the attack;
The respondent’s description of the perpetrator was unclear;
- The facts, when taken together, did not meet the reasonable belief standard;
- The respondent elected not to identify or describe the perpetrator;
- The respondent described the harm as occurring during a battle between both sides; or
- The respondent attributed responsibility to criminal gangs or other groups not directly affiliated with the conflict.

The unattributed incidents detailed in this section are purely illustrative, recognizing that attacks from unidentified sources have caused countless deaths, injuries, and other harms.

i. Ground-Launched Shelling and Rocket Attacks

In contrast with attacks by air, ground-launched attacks were frequently unattributed because the source of the attack was not or could not have been determined by the respondent. In total, survey respondents reported 117 total incidents of non-aerial bombardment that led to harm to a person or property. In the following example, the respondent lost his wife in an attack from an unknown source. He and his two children (ten and 15 years old) were injured, and his home was destroyed. The respondent was unable to recount the story himself, so his brother recounted it in his presence.

A rocket hit their house, causing the instant death of his wife and injury to their two sons. One of the sons broke his arm. In the same incident, [the respondent] was hit by shrapnel from the rocket and a wall fell on him, causing broken ribs, external bleeding, and a broken arm and leg. The respondent’s arm was permanently damaged in the incident. He was treated by the local paramedics, and then he was transported to [host country], because he could not get proper medical assistance in Syria. He has since undergone an operation. (Idlib, Aug. 4, 2012)

A respondent from Yarmouk Camp reported an attack from an unknown source that killed two minors:

The street got shelled. Two of my relatives were killed (17 and 11 years old). I took them to [the] hospital. (Damascus, Aug. 2012)

A respondent from a village near Al-Qusayr reported the death of two more children:

A rocket exploded, killing my brother’s 17-year-old twins. They were torn to pieces. (Feb. 2013)

In giving this account the respondent alleged that the attack came from “rebel fighters” operating in a neighboring area, but he did not give any further information as to the identity of the armed group or as to how or why he was able to identify the source of the attack.

ii. Shootings

Respondents frequently reported deaths by shootings, as they came under attack while going about their normal business, sometimes in front of their homes. 32 accounts of injury or death by shooting
were recorded without attribution because the circumstances of the attacks meant that it was not possible to record with reasonable certainty which of the warring parties had caused the wounding. The following account was unattributed because the shooting occurred at night, so the source of the attack was not seen.

*My family was driving in Al-Barza at night when the car came under fire. My mother and father were killed, and my sister was shot in the back (injured). My brother was also injured. They were on their way home.* (Rif Damashq, Oct. 2011).

Similarly, respondents were frequently caught in the cross-fire during battles between armed groups.

- *My [25-year-old] brother was injured by unknown shooters [in a fight] between the Syrian Army and the Free Syrian Army. He was in front of the house.* (Homs, May 2012)
- *When I was crossing from a regime-controlled area to an FSA controlled area I witnessed two people being shot in a battle going on between both sides. They both died.* (Aleppo City, Feb. 2013)

Although almost all respondents alleged that sniper attacks were perpetrated by the “regime,” “Shabiha,” or “SAA” due to the surrounding circumstances and other simultaneous attacks in the area, many sniper attacks were reported as unattributed because the attacker was hidden. Attributed sniper attacks are reported in Section 4(B)(iv)(c), Sniper Attacks. In the examples reported here, the attacker was not seen.

* I saw a child shot in the chest by a sniper as he was walking in the street. He fell in front of our house. We tried to rescue him, but the sniper shot him again in the chest and he bled to death.* (Dar’a, May 2012)

There were multiple accounts of shootings of children.

- *I saw a child [shot] in his leg. He didn’t die. I didn’t see the shot. I just saw the child playing and [then] shot.* (Aleppo, Sept. 2012)

- *My son (4 years old) was killed by a sniper shot in the head while sitting in his mother’s lap. He died immediately. They were riding a taxi on the way home.* (Dar’a, Jan. 2013)

### iii. Missing Persons

It is important to mention that many persons were reported as missing with no further information about the circumstances of their disappearance. In such instances, neither the perpetrator nor the type of harm could be recorded.

In one example, a respondent stated:

“I saw a child shot in the chest by a sniper as he was walking in the street. He fell in front of our house. We tried to rescue him, but the sniper shot him again in the chest and he bled to death.”
My younger brother is a nurse. The governor of Aleppo called him and asked him to go and get injured persons from Saraqib. We [still] don't know anything about my brother. (Idlib, Sept. 2012)

A respondent from a village in Homs reported:

*My brother was kidnapped [in] October 2012, but they don’t know where or by whom.*  
*He left his work, but never returned.*  (Homs, Oct. 2012)

In another example, a respondent from a town in Idlib Governorate reported that his 78-year-old father went missing after going to work on his land in January 2013.

Some people have been missing since early in the conflict. A respondent from Homs reported that his 24-year-old son disappeared in late 2011, and he has not heard from him since. He had no other information about the disappearance.

iv. Property Destruction

Many respondents reported experiencing or witnessing bombardment and attacks resulting in damage to their property, but often they could not distinguish the source of the attack. There were 153 incident reports of damage and destruction to property that were not attributed to either Syrian Government Forces or Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

For example, a respondent from a village in the Homs countryside reported that between July 2012 and March 2013, several acres of land, planted with olive trees, wheat, vines and other fruit trees, were burned and his house damaged during “battles.”

Additionally, a respondent from a neighborhood in Homs recounted:

*Our house is new and our furniture is too. We moved there in July 2011 and left in February 2012. The house was situated in between the SAA and rebels, both were fighting and we were in the middle. Two rooms were destroyed by shells [containing nails]. The wall bore the trace of nail bombs. The glass was shattered, so we stopped using these rooms and we hid in the bathroom. On February 28, a bomb fell on the diesel heater and it exploded, but no one was harmed. I grabbed my daughters and I ran away with my husband. We were wearing our pajamas.*

Moreover, many respondents fled their homes before they suffered damage, but commonly reported that fighting escalated after they left, resulting in damage and destruction to their property.

- *In March 2013 my son went to Syria and found that our home was hit by a bomb. [Our] home, with furniture, [was destroyed].*  (Damascus, no date provided)

- *According to my parents, the house was destroyed two days after we left.*  (Homs, Mar. 2012)
\begin{itemize}
  \item We were told by the people who stayed that our house has been destroyed by the shelling.  (Rif Damashq, after Jan. 2013)
  \item Two months ago we were told that our houses were burned.  (Homs, Feb. 2013)
  \item Yes, my house was destroyed and burned by a bomb.  They told me but I didn't see it.  (Dar’a, Mar. 2013)
\end{itemize}

Respondents also often received word that their businesses had been destroyed after they left. For example, one respondent from Homs recalled, “I have a shop in the market, it was hit by a rocket that exploded inside and destroyed it.”

v. Theft and General Crime

Respondents from around the country were informed by friends and relatives, or discovered upon returning, that their houses were looted after they fled. This demonstrated an increase in crime and chaos alongside the growing conflict, whether at the hands of criminal gangs, militias, or Syrian Government Forces. As shown in Table 4, 65 of a total of 235 reported harms could not be attributed to a specific group. Many respondents gave accounts similar to these:

\begin{itemize}
  \item After our arrival in [host country], we were informed that our house was looted and destroyed.  (Hasakah, Apr. 2012)
  \item My new house was completely looted.  [They took] the computers, cameras, the television, and all electronics, the refrigerator, and the washing machine.  I was with relatives in Homs when it happened [and returned home to find it looted].  (Hama, Dec. 2012)
  \item After we left, my brother-in-law went to the house and told us that it had been completely looted.  I don't know who did it.  (Aleppo, Dec. 2012)
  \item We left [our home], and we found out later from our aunts who are still living in Damascus that our home had been looted.  (Yarmouk Camp, after Dec. 2012)
\end{itemize}

I was not there but my neighbor sent me a message that the house was looted and the doors and windows were broken.  (Hasakah, Jan. 2013) The following account illustrates the scope of increased criminality, a common by-product of conflict:

We left Syria because they robbed our grocery stores three times and they tried to follow my granddaughters to kidnap them.  I don't know who.  For the past year, there has been no security in Hasakah because they kidnapped all kinds of people (old men and women, children, and girls).  We are afraid to walk down the street, especially women, because they steal our bags.  My neighbor was attacked and they took her bag.  We don't know who. ... There are bad people on motorcycles, masked, without weapons, and they watch women.  A man and his son from a prominent family of merchants ... were
Kidnapping for Ransom

Kidnappings for ransom have reportedly become commonplace in Syria and were frequently cited as a reason for leaving. Three respondents reported that a member of their household had been kidnapped by unknown assailants or criminal gangs and a further six respondents reported witnessing kidnappings by unknown assailants. A respondent gave this account of the circumstances surrounding her husband’s kidnapping.

My husband was abducted and still has not been released. I don’t have any news since his brother paid the ransom but the kidnappers did not release him. A young couple asked my husband, who works in real estate, to show them an apartment in Yalda, faking they were getting married and looking for an apartment. He was abducted. (Damascus, June 2012)

Of 49 reports of abductions/kidnapping as a reason for leaving, 34 were attributed to “unknown assailants” or “other groups”. The majority of these accounts were based on reports of kidnappings for ransom. Fear of kidnapping was particularly common among respondents from Qamishli and Hasakah in Hasakah Governorate.

Kidnappings for ransom [was a reason for leaving]. I know someone who paid 200,000 US Dollars to be released. I don’t know who is doing it. (Hasakah, fled Jan. 2013)

Children were frequent targets, and many respondents expressed particular fear of their daughters being kidnapped. Many respondents said they stopped sending their children to school because of kidnapping.

- We ran away from kidnapping. Our neighbor’s daughter was 17, and she was kidnapped for ransom. She was returned after a couple of days looking lost and thin. (Damascus, fled Dec. 2011)

- My parents heard of kidnapping for financial reasons every day. They [unknown perpetrators] are kidnapping kids. A child was put in a barrel on the roof of a building until his parents gave the kidnappers 100,000 Syrian Pounds [approximately 1,390 US Dollars at the time the respondent fled]. The child is nine years old and his family is a neighbor of my parents. According to my parents, the boy spoke of what happened after his release and said that he was kidnapped by masked individuals and was kept in Azazieh ... Also, another child in the 4th grade was kidnapped by members of a certain clan for financial reasons. The family of this child are my relatives, and their son was kept for 25 days until his father managed to give the kidnappers 7 million Syrian Pounds [approximately 97,300 US dollars at the time the respondent fled]. The child was released on January 28, 2013. (Hasakah, fled Jan. 2013)
We were scared of kidnapping especially since we have daughters. A friend of my daughter was kidnapped when going to school and released after paying ransom. We didn't see her after being released. After that incident I wanted to leave. They also kidnapped kids of wealthy people ... Gang-like groups who came from the Deyrieh clan in Raqqa were kidnapping, shooting, and killing people. (Hasakah, fled Mar. 2013)

Several respondents reported threats against themselves or their family members because of their profession; doctors, in particular, were frequently targeted. A doctor from Aleppo reported receiving threatening calls to his cell phone:

[The caller] asked for money. He said that as a doctor, you should support the revolution. If you don't give money, we will [kidnap or kill] you and your child. I received three calls. Then the network went down so [there were] no more calls. ... Another doctor received the same calls and was kidnapped on his way [home] from the hospital. (Aleppo, Dec. 2012)

Kidnappings were most commonly perceived as targeting the wealthy.

- I left Homs because of kidnapping for financial reasons ... Kidnapping was targeting well-off people. My friend at work was kidnapped and has still not been released. We know nothing about him. (Homs, fled Mar. 2012)
- [We left in fear of] the systemic kidnapping of rich people. (Aleppo, fled Oct. 2012)
- They were targeting [for kidnapping] wealthy people in Hasakah. (Hasakah, fled Jan. 2013)

Additionally, many respondents characterized kidnapping as targeting Christians. See Section 4(I), Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup, for further details.

Some kidnappings for ransom reportedly ended in killings.

My brother was kidnapped for two million Syrian Pounds [approximately 14,200 US Dollars at the time when the incident occurred]. After five days when we failed to give them the money, [so] they killed him and threw him near Khalid bin Walid mosque. (Homs, Apr. – May 2012)

Many thefts were reported alongside and in addition to kidnappings.

- Armed persons attacked shop owners by shooting and beating. There were five or six incidents of this sort, done for looting and kidnapping. (Hasakah, fled Sept. 2012)

G. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

International humanitarian law and international human rights law prohibit SGBV. The following text box provides an overview of the elements of SGBV violations under applicable international laws. For
further international legal background on SGBV, see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict.

### Sexual violence as defined by ICRC Rules and the ICCPR Human Rights Committee:

A broad category of acts, including any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person’s sexuality:

- using coercion, threats of harm, or physical force;
- by any person regardless of relationship to the victim;
- in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

Examples: rape, sexual slavery, sexual harassment, trafficking.

### Gender-based violence as defined by the ICCPR Human Rights Committee:

Any harmful act perpetrated against a person’s will, which is motivated by or based on socially ascribed gender differences.

Examples: attacking a transgender person because that person is transgender; forced marriages; honor killings.

### International law prohibitions against SGBV and the criminalization of SGBV:

- Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions prohibits “violence to life and person” including cruel treatment and torture and “outrages upon personal dignity.”
- Article 14 of the Third Geneva Convention provides that prisoners of war are entitled to “respect for their persons and their honour.”

Building on laws and decisions of earlier international criminal tribunals, the Rome Statute criminalizes a wide array of sexual and gender-based violence.

First hand and same household accounts of SGBV centered around reports of sexual harassment during home raids by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. See Section 4(B)(vi), Home Raids, for illustrative examples. There were no same household accounts of rape. Respondents frequently referred to “neighbors” as having been raped, but not themselves or their own children. Even when other facts pointed to rape, it was rarely disclosed to interviewers. As noted in Section 6(B), Challenges in Documenting Certain Categories of Harm, there were several obstacles to the reporting of SGBV in this study and it is probable that as a result, SGBV was under-reported. Notably, respondents overwhelmingly reported having fled Syria due to fear of rape, whether by Syrian Government Forces, Anti-Regime Armed Groups, or other actors (the latter linked to lawlessness in areas respondents fled from).

The discussion below is divided according to (a) reports and allegations of rape and other forms of SGBV by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups; (b) reports and allegations of rape and other forms of SGBV by unidentified groups and assailants; and (c) other forms of gender-based violence. There
were no specific reports of rape or SGBV by Anti-Regime Armed Groups although, as noted above, fear of SGBV by such groups was cited by multiple respondents as a reason for leaving.

i. Reports Indicating Rape and SGBV by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups

There were a small number of accounts whereby respondents reported witnessing rape or other acts of Syrian Government Forces that suggested rapes were occurring. A respondent gave a first-hand account of an attack on a group of women and girls during a military raid on the respondent’s neighborhood in Homs.

_Six young girls were raped and placed in a yellow public transport car parked in the street. Then they blew up the car and it burned, and the girls burned. They were 13 to 20 [years old]. Their father was traumatized._ (Homs, Mar. 2012)

In another example, a respondent who was detained in the Air Force Intelligence Division at Mezza Airport reported hearing the screams of women and children in adjoining rooms, and suspected that he was hearing rape.

According to many respondents, arrests of women by security forces raised concerns as to what happened to them in custody. Moreover, the mere fact of being taken away from the family home could be perceived as dishonorable. For example, one respondent reported seeing uniformed security personnel arrive in a mini-bus and arrest a woman, but refused to mention the victim’s name because of the perceived dishonor associated with having been taken away.

_I saw women arrested. They invaded houses and took women in mini vans. They kept [a 48-year-old woman] for 15 days. They came after her son, but when they didn’t find him, they took her._ (Rif Damashq, June 2012)

As noted above, respondents overwhelmingly reported having fled Syria out of fear of sexual violence directed primarily against the female members of their household. Respondents referred to hearing of rapes in homes, at checkpoints, in mosques, and at remote locations. In the following examples, respondents recounted stories told to them of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls, committed by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups.

- Girls were kidnapped from the university entrance from our neighborhood and their clothes were taken off in front of the parents by security [forces]. (Location and date not specified)

- There were a lot of women who disappeared and were taken to a night club. There was a man with a wife [who was taken] there. They brought him to see his wife naked among them and
serving them tea. The husband was the one who told us this story. (Location and date not specified)

- My neighbor was raped in front of her brothers. Then they killed [the brothers]. I heard this from the neighbors. (Homs, fled Sept. 2011)

- We left because we were afraid and because of the war. The Syrian Army [soldiers] were abusing women by saying bad words and taking off their hijabs. We could not pass a checkpoint without answering to the army. If they asked anything, we had to answer. The checkpoint soldiers took three ladies from our neighborhood and raped them. [The perpetrators] are from the Syrian Army, and we know them from their dress and government cars. After raping these three ladies, they killed and brought them naked to our neighborhood. (Homs, fled Nov. 2011)

- A friend of my younger sister [was raped] on January 16, 2012. [They] tied up [her] brother, raped his 16-year-old sister in front of him and forced him to watch. The family left the neighborhood; no one knows to where. My sister spoke to the victim after the event. [The perpetrators] were Shabiha. They didn't know how many were present. She was raped by one person only. (Homs, Jan. 2012)

- A cousin told me about a young woman, about 22 years old, who was raped by soldiers at the beginning of the raids. (Dar’a, fled Aug. 2012)

- At checkpoints, female workers, young girls, were allegedly raped [this was not witnessed]. (Hama, fled Jan. 2013)

Respondents also gave second- and third-hand accounts of young men being raped and sexually abused while detained by Syrian Government forces and Affiliated Groups.

- I saw a young man who was arrested and released. He told us about the torture he faced in prison … He saw young men being raped in front of him. (Homs, date not specified)

- My two nephews were arrested. They were sexually abused; they had torture marks; [the perpetrators] used to urinate in their mouths. They were arrested for months at the beginning of the incidents. (Homs, June or July 2011)

- I saw a young man who was arrested and released … He saw young men being raped in front of him. (Homs, date not specified)

Accounts of SGBV by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups, in the context of home raids, are discussed in Section 4(B)(vi)(c), SGBV and Sexual Intimidation of Women and Girls During Home Raids.

ii. Reports Indicating Rape and SGBV by Unidentified Groups and Assailants

There were no first-hand accounts of sexual violence or abduction of women by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, although several women stated that they left because of fear of sexual violence by such groups.
The following account is illustrative:

I left Syria because I was afraid for my family; there were armed groups kidnapping and raping women. The women could not go out in the street without wearing a hijab because of the Jabhat al-Nusra and Al-Qa‘eda checkpoints. If a woman doesn’t put on the hijab they may kill her or rape her. (Hasakah, fled Jan. 2012)

Threats of rape and the fear of rape also appeared to be linked to the overall lack of security and increase in crime. A respondent from a village in Homs reported an attack on two friends without identifying the perpetrators:

[I did not see anything] personally, but I have two friends; they raped them and killed them and threw their bodies into the garbage near the church. They did also these things to the Muslim girls. I saw that on television. (Homs, fled Feb. 2012)

In the following account, the respondent alleged threats against her children by unidentified assailants.

My daughters were followed by people, and I was afraid to let them go to school. My son who is 11 years old also was followed by a masked guy on a motorcycle. They said to my daughters and my son, “We want to rape you.” (Hasakah, fled Sept. 2012)

Similarly, the suspected rape of a 17-year-old boy was linked to a kidnapping for ransom.

The son of my neighbor was kidnapped, and the kidnappers asked for ransom. His name is [not published] and he is 17 years old. His family feared that the boy was raped. This was in October 2012 and I was told [about the incident] by my neighbor [the victim’s parent]. (Yarmouk Camp, fled Dec. 2013)

iii. Other Gender-Based Violence

Although not the primary subject of this report, it should be noted that women who survived sexual attacks apparently sometimes faced violence within their families. Marriages were also reportedly arranged by victims’ families or others in their community in order to restore the honor of the victim and the family.

- The Shabiha ... raped 15 girls at Al-Rifai' Mosque. One of them went mad, and so her father killed her because he could not stand it. The rest of the girls married rebels (FSA). (Homs)

- I heard from my mother that a girl from our neighborhood was raped and her brother wanted to kill her because she was raped. (Hama)

- [T]here were many young girls who were raped and became pregnant. Some of the families of these girls were offering them for marriage without dowry, or offering the resulting children for adoption. (Yarmouk Camp)

One respondent told of how a victim allegedly took her own life after being raped.
Our neighbor was taken and raped. She is a college student. They kept her for 20 days and after they released her she killed herself. I saw her body when they brought her back. (Dar’a)

Although conclusions about the occurrence of SGBV in the course of the conflict in Syria as a whole cannot be made based on the limited accounts provided in this study, it is clear that incidents have occurred. The circumstances surrounding these incidents, including the parties responsible, need to be identified by way of a methodology tailored to record incidents of SGBV and take into account the specific needs of victims.

H. Attacks on Towns and Villages

Respondents were asked whether their neighborhood, town, or village was attacked or destroyed; and, if so, by whom, how, and to what extent. The following graphic, Graphic 4, sets forth the reported levels of destruction to neighborhoods, towns, and villages. For the purposes of this report, property destruction was recorded as partial if the respondent assessed that less than 75% of their neighborhood, town, or village was destroyed, or if the respondent gave descriptions otherwise indicating partial destruction. Total destruction was recorded if the respondent assessed that 75% or more of their neighborhood, town, or village was destroyed, or gave descriptions indicating that level of destruction.
According to the survey population in this study, more significant damage was caused by Syrian Government Forces than by Anti-Regime Armed Groups in the neighborhoods, towns, and villages covered in this study. It should be noted, however, that respondents were asked to report the source of the attack and not the cause of the attack. As noted in Section 4(C)(i), Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives, battles may have resulted because of the presence of Anti-Regime Armed Groups in densely populated areas.
Respondents recounted 75 incidents of damage and destruction of religious sites; 33 reports of damage and destruction of schools; 20 reports of damage and destruction of hospitals; and 12 reports of the destruction of food stores. As discussed in Section 4(B)(vii), Bombardment of Civilian Objects, these sites are entitled to special protection under international humanitarian law. Again, the vast majority of destruction was attributed to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. While only four of these incidents could be attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups based on respondent accounts, 21 reports of damage and destruction resulted from an unknown source or were based on reports that did not meet the reasonable belief standard for perpetrator identification. Again, with reference to Section 4(C)(i), Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives, it should be noted that in multiple cases, respondents reported that Anti-Regime Armed Groups were positioned in or near the protected sites.

The figures in Graphic 4 do not represent totals of separate attacks, as multiple respondents reported on events in the same neighborhoods, towns and villages. A large number of incidents were also reported as “unknown/other” because the incident was not witnessed or the source of the attack could not be identified. The frequency number for “total reported harm” is lower than the number of events attributed to the four perpetrator groups because in some instances destruction was attributed to multiple perpetrators.

I. Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup

This section analyses the differences in perceptions and experiences of harm experienced by respondents of different religions (Christian or Sunni Muslim) and different ethnicities, including variations by religion and ethnicity as to who perpetrated or was perceived to have perpetrated the reported harm.

i. Comparative Analysis: Harm by Religion

This subsection compares the levels, types, and perpetrators of harm suffered by Christian versus Sunni respondents. Graphic 5 charts the following:

- the total number of harms reported by Sunni households compared with Christian households;
- the number of harms attributed to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups by Sunni households compared with Christian households;
- the number of harms attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups by Sunni households compared with Christian households; and
- the number of harms attributed to unknown or other groups by Sunni households compared with Christian households.

Importantly, Graphic 5 also shows the number of Sunni households (729) and the number Christian households (73) that responded to the survey. It is important to interpret the reported harms in light of the fact that the ratio of Sunni households to Christian households was 10:1.
In terms of total harms, as shown below in Graphic 5, 37 incidents of harm were reported by 73 Christian households compared with 1,050 incidents of harm to 729 Sunni households. That means that, on average, Christian households reported 0.51 incidents of harm per household compared with 1.44 incidents of harm per Sunni household. Thus, within the population surveyed, Sunni households have experienced almost three times as many harms as Christian households.

**Graphic 5. Were you or any member of your household harmed? In what way? (Harms and Perpetrators Reported by Religion of Respondent)**

Graphic 5 also demonstrates variations between the two groups regarding the reported perpetrators:

- Christian households only attributed two of the 37 reported harms to Syrian Government Forces compared with 11 to Anti-Regime Armed Groups and the majority, 24, to other or unknown groups. The reason that so many harms were unattributed or “other” was threefold. First, Christian respondents were more reluctant to identify the perpetrator of a harm than Sunni respondents. Second, in multiple cases where Christian respondents identified a perpetrator, they did not provide supporting details or there was confusion between different groups. (See Section 6, Challenges and Limitations). Third, multiple harms were attributed to criminal gangs and general crime, thus not falling within the first two categories of harm.

- By contrast, Muslim households only attributed nine out of 1,050 reported harms to Anti-Regime Armed Groups, attributing 950 to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups and the remaining 96 to unknown or other groups. The high incidence of reports of Syrian Government Forces violations strongly indicates inverse trends in terms of the perpetrators of
harm to Sunni respondents and the perpetrators of harm to Christian respondents. However, the high number of reports of Syrian Government Forces violations may also be attributable to the nature of the violations reported wherein the perpetrator could be easily identified – e.g. arrests, detention, torture and other acts occurring in custody, as well as the fact that the vast majority of incidents reported against Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups were perpetrated by persons in recognizable uniforms. As noted in Section 6, Challenges and Limitations, Syrian Government Forces were more easily identifiable than Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

Graphic 6. Did Your Household Own Property That Was Destroyed or Stolen? (Perpetrators Reported by Religion of Respondent)
Graphic 6 enables a comparison between the perpetrator identifications made by Christian and Sunni respondents with respect to destruction and theft of household and business property. The resulting Graphic indicates slightly different patterns than those occurring in relation to harm to persons:

- First, Christian households reportedly suffered a greater level of property loss by household than Sunni respondents. On average, Christians reported 1.53 events per household compared with 0.85 events per Sunni household.

- The pattern of identification of perpetrators was broadly the same. Again, Christians attributed greater responsibility to Anti-Regime Armed Groups than to Syrian Government Forces, but, as with harms to person, the majority of property losses reported was unattributed or attributed to “other” groups, because Christian respondents typically fled before attacks occurred and thus did not witness the events that led to the destruction of their homes and businesses. See section (iii), below.

- Sunni households again attributed greater responsibility to Syrian Government Forces than to Anti-Regime Armed Groups, however, a larger proportion (26%) of this dataset of the harms were recorded as unknown perpetrator, largely because in the case of battles between both sides using ground launched artillery, perpetrator identification was less clear, and because, as with Christian respondents, many of the reported events resulting in destruction or theft of property were not witnessed.

However, the quantitative dataset does not tell the entire story. Many Christian respondents expressed the view that property loss and destruction was largely due to the presence of Anti-Regime Armed Groups in their neighborhoods. See Section (iii), below. Similarly, while framing events differently, Sunni respondents also reported the presence of Anti-Armed Groups in their area as leading to attacks by Syrian Government Forces and resulting property loss.

It is important to note that the quantitative dataset does not necessarily indicate that certain religious groups were targeted over others. It does, however, show that Christian households reported experiencing a greater level of harm perpetrated by Anti-Regime Armed Groups and Sunni households reported experiencing a greater level of harm perpetrated by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. Moreover, as discussed previously, these results only apply to the population surveyed and cannot be extrapolated to all incidents occurring in Syria. In all interviews, efforts were made to only record perpetrator identifications when respondent accounts met the reasonable belief standard. However, overall, responses from Christian respondents indicated a more pro-Government stance and responses from Sunni respondents indicated a higher level of support for the opposition. These views may have created bias and influenced respondents’ reporting as to who was responsible for harms. The support of different religious groups for opposing sides of the conflict also points to another reason – distinct from religion – for patterns of harm.

ii. Comparative Analysis: Harm by Ethnicity

Graphic 7, below, displays levels of harm to households by ethnicity, showing the principal ethnic groups
surveyed (Arab, Palestinian, and Syriacs/Assyrian), and combining harms to people and property loss. For the purposes of this study, “ethnicity” also encompasses national origin, and thus Palestinians, although Arab, were recorded as a separate group. Assyrians and Syriacs were recorded together.

**Graphic 7. Perpetrators of Harm to Person and Property Loss Combined: Reported by Ethnicity of Respondent Household**

Overall, there is less variation in perpetrator identification among ethnic groups as compared with the variation among religious groups. Notably, Arabs and Palestinians demonstrate similar patterns of harm attributed across perpetrator groups. The differences between reporting of harm by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups as between Syriac/Assyrian and Arab respondents is similar to the variation shown by religion between Sunni and Christian respondents. The overlap between religion and ethnicity within two of the three groups identified in this graph (all Palestinian respondents were Sunni and all
Syriac/Assyrian respondents were Christian) makes it difficult to determine whether the variations portrayed here are due to ethnicity or religion.

iii. Comparative Analysis: Perceptions and Reasons for Leaving

Several patterns and themes emerge after analyzing survey results by subgroup. For the purpose of this analysis, subgroups were determined by a combination of the following factors: religion, ethnicity, and/or geographical location. The three most prevalent subgroups that emerged in this survey were: (1) Sunni Arab respondents (Syrian nationality); (2) Palestinian respondents (i.e. Sunni Arab respondents of Palestinian nationality); and (3) Christian respondents (of Arab, Syriac, Assyrian, or Armenian ethnicity). Within those subgroups, there also appeared to be geographic variations, as discussed below.

The analysis of survey results elaborated earlier in this report looked at incidents of harm occurring within respondents’ households or witnessed by respondents. This subsection of the report also analyzes the remaining questions in the survey, which not only sought to document respondents’ direct experiences, but also their perceptions of the conflict and their reasons for leaving.

At the commencement of the survey, respondents were asked, by way of open-ended questions, “Why did you leave Syria? What happened?” Respondents across all subgroups identified a range of reasons for deciding to leave Syria; however, certain reasons were more prevalent within some demographic groups than within others. Further, some respondents feared a particular party to the conflict or attributed exclusive or greater responsibility for their insecurity to one party to the conflict. There were also some variations in reasons for leaving according to the town, city, or governorate from which the respondent fled. It is possible that location differences may also be linked to the demographic groupings identified above, as most neighborhoods and towns, and even some cities and governorates, are constituted by a predominant religious or ethnic group. It is important to read the analysis here alongside Annex (D), Illustrative Responses: Reasons for Leaving, where more than 50 respondent accounts are organized by governorate.

After discussing their experiences, respondents were asked whether perpetrators “appeared to be targeting particular groups or types of people” or whether “any particular groups or types of people were spared from harm.” The purpose of the question was to attempt to determine possible motives behind an attack. Researchers were careful to ask questions in a non-leading way and to obtain reasons for the responses. Responses were influenced by one or more of a range of factors including the attacks that the respondent had witnessed or experienced, the time at which the respondent fled Syria, the respondent’s place of residence, the perceived “attacker” or “perpetrator” in question, the respondent’s political affiliations or leanings (if any), and in some cases the respondent’s religion or ethnicity. Respondents’ experiences in the Syrian conflict appear to bear a correlation with their religion or ethnicity. Thus, respondents’ perceptions as to who was targeted or spared in relation to a particular attack or category of harm are discussed in this subsection under subheadings (ii) to (iv), as applicable.

It is important to note while some of the respondent statements in this subsection are based on witnessed or experienced events, the questions and responses discussed in this subsection did not
require the respondent either to have witnessed or experienced the events described. The extracts below and in Annex (D), Reasons for Leaving Syria, may not, therefore, meet the *reasonable belief* standard either as to the occurrence of the event alleged or as to the allegations regarding the named perpetrator. The statements are intended to detail respondents’ reasons for leaving and other perceptions related to the conflict.

a. **Sunni Arab Respondents**

In this report, the term “Sunni Arab” is used to describe Syrian respondents who reported their religion as Sunni and their ethnicity as Arab. Palestinian respondents who are also Arabs are discussed in subsection (b), below. Sunni Arab respondents reported experiencing attacks on their families, homes, and villages by Syrian Government Forces more often than by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and this was reflected in their reasons for leaving. Respondents typically cited one or more of the following acts by Syrian Government Forces as a reason for leaving: aerial bombardment and other armed assaults; home raids; arrest and detention (and ensuing acts such as torture and disappearances); specific threats to themselves or members of their household; and fear of the above acts or other forms of violence by Syrian Government Forces.

The following are illustrative accounts of the range of acts and fears to which Sunni Arab respondents typically attributed their decision to flee Syria.

- **I was a student at the University of Damascus. My roommate was arrested. We used to go to rallies together. Then, Syrian Air Force Intelligence [asked] me to go to their offices. They are the most terrible. We are all afraid of them; our neighbor was tortured to death by [Syrian] Air Force Intelligence. [In addition,] my house in [another governorate] was destroyed by a rocket. Our neighborhood was next to a Shiite neighborhood, [so] we could not move from our house because of civilian Shiites serving as snipers. The army sent a battalion to defend the Shiite neighborhood. Our neighborhood was completely evacuated, and we could not get anything for our families. My family stayed in [our neighborhood]; they are living a miserable life. My cousin was killed yesterday by an airplane.** (Male, 23, Damascus, fled July 2012)

- **[I left because] there was intense bombardment. There was also a large number of snipers on high buildings’ roofs, shooting randomly at any man, woman, or child, with no exceptions. [Soldiers at] many checkpoints used to randomly shoot at houses and randomly detain young men. I had to move to a new place every day, and I could not stay at home because of the heavy bombing. I was always hiding in the fields and orchards with my family. The SAA raided my house four times, approximately once every 20 days. The last time was in May 2012. [The raids were] because I was with the FSA; they were looking for weapons and terrorists. I joined the FSA at the beginning of the revolution in March 2011. I drove a vehicle, and I used to drive members of the FSA, weapons, and casualties from one place to another. My nephew was with the FSA and was killed 15 days ago while he went on a mission of bringing weapons. He was shot by an SAA sniper. He was 18 years old.** (Male, 36, Dar’a, fled July 2012)
• [I left because] my area was divided into two parts, with many checkpoints. We had no electricity for 25 days, and we were bombed by airplanes and missiles continuously. My house was raided four times. The first time, 25 soldiers wearing military uniforms, boots, and helmets came. They inspected the house, looking for motorcycles. They stole and burnt an electric engine that they found. One officer asked me about my husband, and I answered that he is away (travelling). He cursed, asking, “How come all women are around while all their husbands are away?” The second raid [on my house] was in September 2011, as 45 soldiers and more came in. They wore black uniforms with a black pendant holding a bullet, a black bandana on their head, and black sport shoes. Some of them wore green military uniforms, some wore black, and some wore tracksuits/pajamas in different colors. They spoke a non-Arabic language. They broke all the furniture in the house. The third time, a number of soldiers came in when I was changing my (one and a half-year-old) daughter’s clothes. One of the soldiers made an ugly sexual insult with an Alawite accent; I was terrified. The fourth time, my village was raided; around 200 soldiers came with many tanks. An officer asked me to give him my husband’s passport. Some soldiers raided and slept in a house that belonged to my relatives. In the morning, they arrested one of my relatives, and 18-year-old man. They detained him for two-and-a-half months. They destroyed the house and the furniture, and stole many electric appliances and the safe where money is kept. One of the soldiers in the street was yelling (“Where are the women, bring the women out, we want to please ourselves!”). (Female, 36, Dar’a, fled Aug. 2012)

• [I left because of] fear of arrest, raids, and what happens after arrest. [There were] constant electricity outages, for a whole year, due to [attacks] targeting power lines. My area was shelled; I fled to my father’s house in the same area. I heard that my house was raided, so I quickly went back to it but was prevented from entering [by the circumstance I encountered]. There was shelling by airplanes and tanks, and over 100 soldiers surrounded the area. An officer stopped me from going to my home. They threatened to arrest me and told me, “It is better for your house to be destroyed than for you and your house to be destroyed.” The aggressor was [a member of] the Syrian Army; he wore a camouflage military uniform and had a machine gun and a belt of grenades. After the soldiers left, I went back to my house and placed a new lock on the door. I found that a matmourah [an underground storage pit, for money or other valuables] was raided. The furniture was vandalized, and the toilet was used by the soldiers. (Male, 31, Rif Damashq, fled Jan. 2013)

Notably, most of the direct harms to person reported in this study as violations by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups were reported only by Sunni Muslims (both Syrian and Palestinian), including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, beatings, and home raids.

Fear of sexual violence was common among respondents, regardless of religion or ethnicity. However, the respondents’ fear as to who might perpetrate such violence typically varied according to the subgroup. Sunni Arab respondents generally feared that rape and other forms of sexual violence would be perpetrated by Syrian Government Forces or Shabiha. For example:
- [We left Syria] due to the violence, as the Shabiha kidnap and rape women. I know a family where the woman was raped, and all the members of the family were killed after that. (Female, 30, Homs, fled Mar. 2012)

- [I left due to] fear for myself and my daughters regarding rapes and sexual attacks, as I heard they were raping women. [I also left] due to the raids, as they [uniformed Syrian Army or Security] raided the town and entered my house in June 2012 about a month before I left. They were disrespectful, they used foul language … and they searched my private clothes. (Female, 44 Dar’a, fled July 2012)

While the majority of Sunni Arab respondents cited actions or fear of actions by Syrian Government Forces as a reason for leaving, multiple respondents also cited violence by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and being caught in the middle of battles between both sides, as reasons for leaving. In the following account, a respondent alleged FSA bombardment and alleged that the FSA forced him to sell his home.

I was afraid for my children from the bombardment [rocket attack] by the Syrian Army and FSA. A bomb fell on my apartment when we were running away from our city … My farm was taken [by the FSA], after threatening me and forcing me to sign a sale contract. (Male, 44, Rif Damashq, fled Feb. 2013)

A large number of respondents also attributed their decision to flee to general insecurity, crime, economic hardship, and loss of their livelihood. For example:

- [There was] bombardment on the area, and one shell fell on our heater in February 2012. We left to stay with the in-laws. We stayed [with them for] one month and then left because it was crowded. We went to Damascus and then to Qudsaya and stayed there from April to July 2012, and then left when a sniper was located on a building roof in front of us and it was unsafe. [There was] no bread, no pharmacy, no doctor, no shops, so I decided to leave. (Female, 48, Homs, fled July 2012)

- My house was destroyed, and there is no longer means of living there (heavy bombing, no electricity, no water, and no food). For two years, I didn’t work; I was dismissed from my job because I couldn’t go there due to blockades. Around 20,000 persons left after the battles heated up and the blockade [was instituted], with 200 persons injured. Because of the blockade, a large number of people left … There was fighting between rebels and the SAA. (Male, 38, Homs, fled May 2013)

In relation to attacks by Syrian Government Forces, a range of views were expressed by Sunni Arab respondents as to whether particular groups were targeted or spared. Looking at respondents’ answers to these questions on the whole, phases of targeting emerge. Several respondents took the view that initially only specific people were targeted, often by name, such as those who participated in demonstrations. In the next phase, “FSA” and army defectors were targeted, along with members of their families. Then, attacks became “indiscriminate”; the Arabic word “ashwa’il,” which translates as “indiscriminate,” “random,” or “arbitrary,” was frequently used by survey respondents to describe
attacks by Syrian Government Forces. Aerial attacks, in particular, were perceived as indiscriminate. A number of respondents described attacks as “targeting civilians.” Others said that attacks targeted “those who were against the regime.” Some respondents mentioned that targets included the “wealthy,” “educated,” and certain professional groups such as doctors and journalists. Multiple respondents also took the view that Sunni neighborhoods were targeted while Alawite and Shiite neighborhoods were spared. To a lesser extent, respondents also expressed the view that Christian and Druze neighborhoods were spared, although they typically perceived them to be “neutral” in contrast with Alawites and Shiites. As a respondent from Homs stated:

_{Shiites and Alawites are still living in peace in their neighborhood. This shows they are not being targeted or harmed. Our [Sunni] neighborhoods are war zones. Christians are neutral. The Government helped them leave._ (Male, 45, Homs, fled July 2012)

The research team noticed that later-surveyed respondents were more likely to describe attacks as targeting “Sunnis” than those surveyed earlier in 2013, even if they had left Syria at the same time or before the survey respondents interviewed in early 2013. It is not clear whether that was linked to an increased sense of being targeted based on increased interactions within refugee communities in host countries, or whether it was based on a shift in the nature of the conflict. A small number of Sunni respondents described attacks as “sectarian.”

b. Palestinian Respondents

Of the 51 Palestinian respondents in this study, 27 came from Yarmouk Camp, and a total of 37 were either from Yarmouk Camp or the rest of Damascus. Accordingly, Yarmouk Camp residents’ reasons for leaving and perceptions can be discussed as a distinct category. The Palestinian population in Yarmouk Camp overwhelmingly reported fleeing their homes in the camp due to entry of Anti-Regime Armed Groups to the camp and aerial bombardment by Syrian Arab Air Forces which swiftly followed. The vast majority of respondents from Yarmouk Camp reported fleeing in the second half of December 2012. The following accounts by survey respondents as to why they and their families fled Yarmouk Camp in December 2012 are typical.

_{On December 15, 2012, the FSA entered the camp and started shooting in the street. They asked us to open our windows because they wanted to fire RPGs [rocket propelled grenades]. We were living on the ground floor. Our neighbor helped us to open windows and to run away, and so we came to [host country]. I saw the FSA because they were in our street. There were clashes between FSA and the PLA [Palestinian Liberation Army] headquarters._ (Female, 28)
The case of Yarmouk Camp is notable in that much of the population of Yarmouk Camp opposed the entry of Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and yet the camp population was subjected to immediate and intensive bombardment by Syrian Air Forces as a result of anti-regime activities within the camp. While there were pre-existing pro- and anti-government divisions among militias in the camp, the events that led to air strikes were the entry of groups from outside the Yarmouk Camp population. The events in Yarmouk Camp raise questions as to the intensity of responses by Syrian Government Forces, in contrast with its responses in other heavily bombarded areas, such as neighborhoods of Homs, where aerial bombardment was typically preceded by prolonged ground battles.

Primarily due to the Syrian Government Forces’ response, residents reportedly fled in massive numbers, and multiple respondents reported that the camp suffered significant damage and areas of the camp were completely destroyed.¹¹²

When asked if particular groups were targeted in attacks by either side in Yarmouk Camp, some respondents pointed to the targeting by FSA of individuals and members of their families who were with the pro-government PFLP-General Command. See Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups, for further details on the PFLP-General Command. The majority described the Syrian Government Forces bombardment of Yarmouk Camp as “indiscriminate.”

Notably, many Palestinian respondents were fearful of identifying perpetrators regardless of the perpetrator’s affiliation. As one respondent stated when describing civilian deaths due to bombardment, “We know who did it, but we can’t say because we still have family in Syria.”

Many respondents from among the Palestinian population in Yarmouk Camp and the broader Palestinian population expressed neutrality in relation to the conflict. When asked if they would seek redress when the conflict was over, they gave a range of responses. Multiple respondents expressed a desire for overall “justice”; some referred to redress for specific personal loss, many sought only to return to their homes and resume their lives. Palestinian respondents only rarely expressed a desire for redress against a particular party to the conflict. The following examples are illustrative.

- I want to go back and live in peace. I want my house and property protected, and [I want to] not to be discriminated against as a Palestinian. (Male, 63)

- I want justice, freedom, and to live in dignity without humiliation. I also want the corrupt people to leave. (Male, 43)

- I only ask God if I can know who killed my son, so I may go to court. If there is a way to get redress … I will try to obtain it. (Male, 55)

- [I want] to live in peace in the camp, feel safe, forget everything, and start again from zero. Sure, I want redress if there is a possibility without specifying which side. (Male, 33)
• *Everybody who has contributed to the killing must be put on trial in an international court.* (Male, 56)

• *[I want] to return back home and for the children to return to school. My son is experiencing emotional problems. He has become more aggressive.* (Female, 45)

Some Palestinian respondents expressed hopelessness in the face of the current conflict. The following statements are illustrative.

• *No, there is no one to give compensation. We surrender to God.* (Male, 38)

• *No. Nobody will do us good.* (Female, 43)

Many Palestinian respondents complained of a lack of livelihood and well-being in their host country. While the circumstances of refugees in host countries is beyond the scope of this report, it bears mentioning that Palestinian respondents appeared to be more vulnerable in their host countries than other Syrian refugee populations in Lebanon and Jordan.

c. **Christian Respondents**

73 interviews were conducted with Christian respondents; this included respondents who were ethnically Syriac or Assyrian (38 respondents), Armenian (2 respondents), and Arab (33 respondents).

This section aims to capture the reasons for and patterns of displacement among Syria’s Christian minorities. Christian respondents’ experiences and perceptions of the conflict, and their reasons for leaving, varied considerably according to their place of origin in Syria. The majority fled from cities and towns in Hasakah Governorate or from Al-Qusayr and neighboring villages in Homs Governorate. There was also a third grouping of Christian respondents from other areas, including Aleppo, Rif Damashq, and Raqqa. Discussion of the Christian sample is divided into these three groupings, although there are parallels across all three groups.

Notably, many Christian respondents did not witness or experience direct harm before leaving, but left in anticipation or fear of harm. As with the general overview of respondents’ reasons for leaving, this discussion was not limited to first-hand and witnessed accounts because to do so would fail to adequately capture the reasons for leaving or the perceptions of this group.

(a) **Al-Qusayr and Neighboring Villages**

Parallel but contrasting stories emerged from interviews with Christian respondents from Al-Qusayr and surrounding areas. Many respondents stated that they fled their homes because they felt targeted as Christians or based on their perceived (or real) political allegiances. Several respondents reported hearing or being told of announcements from mosques calling at random for Christians to leave or to join the uprising. The slogan, “Alawites to the grave and Christians to Beirut,” was often cited as an example of a call for jihad against Alawites and for Christians to leave the country, although the statements were not attributed to a particular armed group and most accounts of such proclamations
were second-hand. The following account is indicative of a respondent who felt that Anti-Regime Armed Groups were targeting Christians.

We left because of sectarianism. It became sectarian because we didn't participate in the protests. The armed individuals started shooting at us and shelling us. Muslims started the attacks. There were 14,000 Christians in Al-Qusayr. Clashes started between the army and the armed individuals, by shooting and shelling rockets. The protesters lied. They said that they were unarmed and that they don't have weapons, but they did. They threatened people in the army and those who worked for the government and they told them to leave. Also, they threatened shop owners and told them to shut down their shops to show that they are also protesting and that everyone supports the revolution. Those who refused to shut down their shops were shot at. In this situation, we could only stay for one month. When they attacked [a government facility], the army sent reinforcements and the armed groups started attacking them. All this was next to our house. In early incidents, they shouted "Christians to Beirut and Alawites to the grave." (Male, 20)

By contrast, a number of Christians originating from Al-Qusayr reported that threats were not directed towards them as Christians; instead they left from fear of harm due to the current prevalence of violence in Syria. They cited an increase in crime; most notably, kidnappings for ransom, which they described as targeting the wealthy, not necessarily specifically Christians. (Responses suggested that Christians were, on average, among the wealthier residents of Al-Qusayr). They did not connect kidnappings for ransom to any particular Anti-Regime Armed Groups. Some respondents expressly identified themselves and other Christians as neutral in the conflict and felt that they were victims in a war that they did not partake in. Some respondents also reported that they were treated as neutral by Anti-Regime Armed Groups and thus were assisted in leaving Al-Qusayr safely. Several respondents reported that their situation became untenable when fighters from other parts of Syria and foreigners joined the battles in Al-Qusayr. Regardless of how they viewed the conflict, most Al-Qusayr residents left from fear due to escalating battles between the Syrian Armed Forces and Anti-Regime Armed Groups; battles which they reported as having started when Anti-Regime Armed Groups entered their neighborhoods and launched attacks.

Some respondents did state that abductions and killings targeted particular sects of Christians, while others took the view that individuals or families were targeted due to their support for or affiliations with the regime. According to a 25-year-old female respondent, “Anyone related to the state in any way was exposed to violence.” A 50-year-old female respondent similarly stated, “Christians were targeted and Muslims were targeted, if they were with the regime.” The incident details provided by respondents in both cases mostly indicated that the targeting was due to the victims’ affiliations and pro-regime stance. There were many reports of killings of multiple members of particular families because members of those families had openly expressed support for the regime. In most cases, killings were not witnessed, so perpetrators could not be identified in accordance with the reasonable belief standard. However, respondents typically
attributed the deaths to “opposition groups” or “FSA” because of the affiliations or pro-regime stance of the victim or the assertion of control by a particular group over the area where the victim was found.

Forced closures of businesses were reported, as part of a pattern of pressuring business owners to join the uprising. One 47-year-old respondent reported that his business was destroyed by fighters from the Al-Farouk Brigade. “After threatening me and my son, the rebels burned down my business as I was standing there.” Some saw these attacks as targeting Christians, but others reported more general pressure to force people to join the uprising and to suppress support for the regime. According to a 25-year-old female respondent, “There were pro-regime demonstrators in Al-Qusayr in March-April 2011, but then they stopped because they were afraid of being killed.”

A majority of Christian respondents from Al-Qusayr expressed the view that their neighborhoods, including houses, schools, and churches, were taken over by Anti-Regime Armed Groups; many believed that this was so that the SAA would target and destroy them. Many respondents thus held the Anti-Regime Armed Groups accountable for destruction, while reporting that the source of bombardment was the SAA. One respondent stated, “They [Anti-Regime Armed Groups] used to shoot at the army from the roof [of the Church], so the SAA was obliged to bomb the Church.”

Although not personally witnessed by respondents, many gave second-hand reports of military operations launched from their homes by Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and some had returned home and personally observed evidence that their homes were occupied, including walls destroyed to create passages for movement between buildings. The majority of respondents from Al-Qusayr’s Christian community reported serious damage or complete destruction of their homes, due to a combination of damage from ground battles between opposing forces and aerial bombardment. The following account, from a 25-year-old female respondent, gives a sense of such destruction.

Three weeks ago [in late June 2013] we went to see the house. It’s all destroyed. The ceilings are destroyed. There are traces of shooting and holes from rockets. Things were stolen. There are corpses buried in the garden. My brothers saw them; they are not well buried.

Christian respondents from Al-Qusayr rarely identified perpetrators as members of a particular armed group. This may have been largely due to the fact that the incidents they discussed occurred during the first year of the uprising, when Anti-Regime Armed Groups were not yet formed or were still forming. Respondents consistently reported that a significant proportion of the opposition fighters in Al-Qusayr were from the local area. They identified them as “armed men” or by their family names, rather than attaching them to a particular group. In some cases, respondents named Al-Farouk Brigade, which was at the time (early 2012) under the umbrella of the FSA. Some respondents simply used the term “terrorists,” to describe the perpetrators, reflecting terminology used by the government and state.
media. There may also have been a reluctance to identify groups given the stated preference of many Al-Qusayr respondents to return and therefore presumably reside again with those who took up arms. Many referred to the presence of foreigners in Al-Qusayr, even when they did not name a group. Finally, in the case of respondents from Al-Qusayr, many of the reported events were not actually witnessed and so the relevant perpetrators could not be identified.

When asked whether they would seek redress for the losses suffered in this conflict, many Christian respondents from Al-Qusayr expressed confidence that the government would provide compensation for them, and some noted that they had already begun the process of filing claims. But, others expressed a lack of confidence in any system of justice, explaining:

- *I don't know who to ask for justice and compensation for [the destruction to] my home.* (Female, 39)

- *There is no justice because justice is selective between Christians and Muslims. The Muslim can get his rights but Christians, no, because no one said anything after destroying the monastery and Virgin Mary [in the respondent’s neighborhood]*. (Male, 42)

- *What justice? How do you expect me to sit at the same table and reason with the people who committed those violations? Unless God gives me the strength to do so, our heritage with God is to not hurt anyone.* (Male, 76)

Some Christian respondents from Al-Qusayr indicated that they could not again live with the people or groups who they believed had wronged them. A small number of respondents expressed sectarian views in this regard, such as an unwillingness to live with Muslims again or a desire to seek retribution on sectarian grounds. The majority expressed a desire to return and live in peace and security, commonly referring to how it was “before”:

- *I want peace and [I want for] the situation to be calm, and [for] everyone to return to Syria.* (Female, 50)

- *I will go back only if I [can] live in a secure and safe community as before.* (Female, 24)

- *I only need security, as before.* (Female, 33)

- *We wish justice would prevail, but when? We wish people would stick together. We never differentiated before amongst people of different religions.* (Female, 40)

- *We used to live in a just and safe environment. We want it to be back like before.* (Male, 26)

(b) **Hasakah Governorate**

Christian respondents from Hasakah Governorate typically came from large Christian (predominantly Syriac and Assyrian) communities in Hasakah and Qamishli. Respondents in these groups commonly cited the general decline in living conditions (the lack of electricity, water, food, and lack of security) as among their principal reasons for leaving. Most respondents in this group reported that they feared
violence in the form of kidnapping for ransom and increased theft and looting of homes; they typically characterized these acts as targeting the wealthy and many gave detailed second-hand accounts of kidnappings for ransom, which frequently took the form of kidnapping of children. See also Section 4(F)(vi), Kidnapping for Ransom. Very few respondents characterized kidnappings as targeting Christians. Many respondents in this group left in anticipation of an increase in violence, based on incidents in nearby areas, including rumored incidents of rape. But the majority did not directly experience conflict-related harm. The following account is illustrative.

_I feared for the safety of my children, especially my girls, because of the rumors about rapes in the neighboring villages and kidnappings for ransom. My village itself did not witness any particular incidents, but we heard about the aerial bombing of neighboring villages._ [We heard about] the death of a child in an Assyrian village next to our village, due to a rocket attack on that village a few days before we left.  
(Female, 44)

An isolated suicide attack on a security compound in Qamishli was widely reported, and can be confirmed through media reports. A small number of civilian casualties were reported as a result of this attack, but it was not perceived as an attack on civilians. In relation to Hasakah City, respondents reported fighting between Syrian Government Forces and Anti-Regime Armed Groups on the outskirts of the city, but did not cite this as a reason for leaving.

There were reports by female survey respondents of intimidation at checkpoints, and of being forced to wear the hijab. According to one respondent:

_When we came to Hasakah there were about 40 checkpoints manned by armed men. I started wearing a headscarf because they told me if they saw my hair, they might beat me and kidnap me, or cut my hair._  
(Female, 30)

The majority of respondents in this group did not, however, site sectarian violence as a reason for their leaving.

There were some incident reports alleging intimidation of Christians by Kurds, although the incidents were rarely attributed to specific armed groups. One respondent reported that a Kurdish woman from the neighborhood came to his home, and to the homes of other Christians, threatening to force sales of their homes for half their value, or force them out. He also reported that a neighbor of his was physically intimidated by “men on motorbikes” and forced to sell his house quickly and leave. Another respondent alleged that his shop was burned by a Kurd. There were reports that the Kurdish flag was raised in place of the Syrian flag on public buildings, such as schools.
The majority of respondents from Hasakah left shortly after the Assad regime ceded power over areas in the northeast to Kurdish groups, although very few expressly cited this event as the reason for leaving. However, one respondent explained:

After the transition of power from the government to the PKK, the situation changed. We were used to the government rule, but when power was transferred to the Kurds, first we did not understand their language, and [then] the Kurds required that young men join them in working to establish a Kurdish area to join with North Iraqi Kurdistan. We feared the fall of the regime, and of being under “unknown hands.” ... Some young men joined the PKK in protest, out of fear, and because they didn't want to serve in the army. The Kurds appealed to them with [promises of] protection, so the men went to the borders [with the PKK]. I was harassed by [the PKK]. They asked me why I did not participate in guarding [a reference to popular committees], and I made excuses about work. To avoid trouble, I did not resist them; I escaped to [host country]. (Male, 46)

Many respondents from Hasakah and Qamishli expressed an unwillingness to return to Syria. They stated that they had traveled to the host country in the hopes of then emigrating further abroad. Although respondents in this group did not typically site sectarian or ethnic violence as a reason for leaving, many took the view that there was no future for them in Syria or that the government could not or would not protect them. When asked if they would seek redress, some respondents said that they would, but others were less confident, expressing such views as “I don’t think anyone will hear me” or that they “[j]ust want to leave Syria” or “live in dignity, anywhere.”

(c) Other Christian Communities

Respondents from other Christian communities throughout the country reported similar experiences. As with Hasakah, Christian respondents from Aleppo reported a heightened fear of attacks targeting the wealthy, such as kidnappings for ransom and theft. Christians from various cities and villages also reported leaving after having lost their homes and businesses in battles. For example, a respondent from Aleppo reported:

There were rockets in Aleppo. Our house was partially destroyed, and my husband’s shop was completely destroyed. There is no future [there] for my children. We were scared. The FSA was asking people in the area to leave so they can bomb the area to take it from the government. The FSA threatened people, [telling them] to leave their houses and [saying that] if they did not, they would bomb anyway. I did not see this but the FSA were known to people because they wore the script, “There is no God but Allah.” (Female, 44)

Respondents from several towns and cities reported that Anti-Regime Armed Groups forced them to close their businesses, in order to express their support for the uprising. This had an immediate impact on respondents’ livelihoods and was a factor influencing their decisions to leave. The following incident reportedly occurred in November 2012.
The FSA threatened to take my husband’s internet shop because they wanted him to participate with them. They used to come and insert papers under the door or on the ground [in front of the shop]. I can’t remember the wording, but it said “we will kill and burn whoever opens their shops.” (Female, 28, Raqqa)

Similarly, a 65-year-old male respondent from a village in Rif Damashq explained that the Anti-Regime Armed Groups “forced us to close our stores, [and then] when the SAA came, they forced us to open them.”

There were also reports of women being instructed to cover their bodies and heads in various towns and cities.

One day before we came to [host country], my husband told me they [perpetrators’ identities not specified] came and asked that all people wear the abaya [a loose, robe-like dress, covering the wearer’s whole body except for the feet, hands, and face] and hijab. I also heard this from the neighbors and my relatives. (Female, 28, Raqqa)

Some respondents cited rumors of the rape of Christian women among their reasons for taking their families out of Syria, although, as previously discussed, no respondents recounted any first-hand experiences.

Christian respondents from all areas expressed a sense of being neutral and caught in the middle. Many expressed concern regarding a new regime.

- With the presence of extremists, there will not be justice in Syria. The extremists are overwhelming the moderate-thinking Sunnis. (Male, 28, Rif Damashq)
- Of course we want justice and equality, but now I don’t think equality will prevail. (Male, 35, Homs)
- [We want] to fix all the destruction and have the country as it was before. (Male, 22, Dar’a)

Some expressed concern regarding the participation of foreign fighters among Anti-Regime Armed Groups and its implications for the future of the country.

As Syrians, we can forgive each other. But that won’t happen with the presence of foreigners. If foreigners don’t pull out of Syria, the crisis won’t end. (Male, 33, Dar’a)

A respondent from Aleppo similarly expressed her fears regarding the future.

As Armenians, we didn’t [previously] suffer from any kind of violations or restrictions. The president granted us liberties, autonomy, and rights. We had our own schools and churches. We were living peacefully with other Christians and with Muslims. Now we are afraid of the FSA, and Syria is not what it used to be. (Female, 42, Aleppo)
J. Harms by Governorate

The tables below illustrate harms by governorate in the three governorates with the highest response rate in this survey: Damascus, Homs and Dar’a. They show slightly different patterns.

**Graphic 8. Were You or Any Member of your Household Harmed? In What Way? (Reported By Governorate and Perpetrator)**

- Strikingly, of responses from Dar’a governorate, not a single harm to a respondent or a member of their household is reported as having been committed by Anti-Regime Armed Groups. The population of Dar’a witnessed and participated in the earliest events of the uprising, and, correspondingly, appears to have borne the brunt of the government crackdown. Alternatively, the reporting of zero harms could also be indicative of respondent bias.

- Damascus and Homs show more diverse results, likely because they represent less homogenous populations. As indicated by respondent narratives and discussed above, populations in Homs, notably Al-Qusayr and surrounding villages, reported attacks on their areas and on targeted persons by Anti-Regime Armed Groups. The city of Homs and towns throughout the governorate have also seen fierce battles between opposing sides, thus accounting for a large number of harms for which a perpetrator could not be directly attributed. The siege on Yarmouk Camp that followed the Anti-Regime Armed Groups’ forcible takeover of parts of the camp would also account for a number of the harm incidents attributed to Anti-Regime Armed Groups operating in Damascus.
Graphic 9. Did Your Household Own Property or Things That Were Destroyed or Stolen? (Reported by Governorate and Perpetrator)

- Graphic 9 shows property theft and destruction by perpetrator, again indicating the asymmetric nature of harms perpetrated in Dar’a.

- As noted throughout the report, property theft and destruction often could not be attributed to a particular group. Property loss is attributed across all three perpetrator groupings in Damascus; this may reflect the nature of the conflict as it reached the capital and surrounding areas, where Anti-Regime Armed Groups had become more organized and areas were more fiercely contested.

- The same can be said for Homs governorate and the example of Al-Qusayr that is elaborated in this report. The fact that property loss is largely attributed to Syrian Government Forces is likely linked to the prolonged siege on the city of Homs, which was widely reported by survey respondents. Harm rates for cities and towns cannot, however, be specifically quantified as data was not coded and aggregated at that level.
K. Post-Conflict Redress

Respondents’ opinions as to whether they would seek post-conflict redress are elaborated in Annex (E), Post-Conflict Redress, which contains illustrative quotes from all respondent demographics (age, gender, governorate, religion, and ethnicity). Annex (E) is organized by subheadings reflecting the themes that emerged from the responses including: Justice, Compensation, Retribution, Lack of Confidence in a Just Resolution, Peace and Repatriation, and Divine Providence.
5. Project Methodology

The goal of this study was to determine the extent of human rights and international humanitarian law violations occurring in Syria and to identify categories of perpetrators by surveying refugee populations in Jordan and Lebanon. ABA ROLI compiled a sampling frame of 14,000 Syrian refugees based on registries maintained by local NGOs and other service providers in Jordan and Lebanon. ABA ROLI used stratified, systematic sampling, described below, to select households and conducted interviews with one adult in each household from January 28 to July 23, 2013. The survey questionnaire covered events that happened since the start of the civil war in Syria in March 2011. Limitations in the sampling caused by the challenges of administering interviews in the midst of a humanitarian emergency, discussed below, prevent the results from being generalizable to all Syrian refugees, as well as to the refugee populations in the locations where the interviews were conducted. Notwithstanding these limitations, the results of this study tell a compelling story.

A. Sampling

In Jordan and Lebanon, refugees were settled in urban communities, at a UNHCR refugee camp, or a Palestinian camp administered by UNRWA. The data collected for this project consisted of a stratified sample, with the overall population divided into subpopulations (known as strata) before sampling. Stratified sampling enabled ABA ROLI to determine the characteristics of each specific stratum, with a stratum consisting of members of a certain village, city, district, or religious sub-group. Each stratum was obtained through the registries of local NGOs and other service providers in Jordan and Lebanon with knowledge of, and access to, refugee populations. Systematic samples were taken from each stratum to yield samples that would represent entire refugee populations in the locations where the interviews were conducted.

ABA ROLI sampled from the client lists of 16 local NGOs and service providers. In Jordan, all individuals in the sample frame resided in or around the following five cities: Mafraq and Irbid (both near the Syrian border in the north of the country, in the Mafraq and Irbid Governorates, respectively), Amman (the capital, in Amman Governorate), and Madaba and Zarqa (in central Jordan, in Madaba and Zarqa Governorates, respectively). In Lebanon, individuals in the sample frame lived in ten different areas: Aley and its environs (in the Mount Lebanon Governorate), Jdeideh (in the Matn District of Mount Lebanon Governorate), Ajaltoun (in the Keserwan District of Mount Lebanon Governorate), Al-Qalamoun and Koura (in the North Governorate), Zahlah (in the Beqaa Governorate), Khirbet Rouha (in the Beqaa Governorate), Saida (in the South Governorate), and two Palestinian refugee camps: Wavell (or Al-Jalil) Camp in Baalbek (in the Beqaa Governorate) and Shatila Camp (in the Beirut Governorate).

ABA ROLI began this project by contacting the executive directors or managers of the NGOs and service providers and explaining the objectives of the project, the procedures of the study, and the confidentiality of data. Once the NGO or service provider agreed to participate, ABA ROLI calculated the...
sampling interval for the relevant stratum by dividing the total number of households in the population by the number it wanted in the sample, with an expected response rate between 80-85%. ABA ROLI calculated the sample size it wanted for each stratum, balancing logistical constraints with the need to gather sufficient information to capture the major trends in human rights violations that refugees experienced. Using the predetermined sampling interval, every “nth” household appearing on the service provider’s client list was chosen for interviewing. A member of ABA ROLI’s research team or a representative of the service provider called the household, obtained initial consent for the interview, and scheduled a time to carry out the interview in person with a household member chosen at random.

In Jordan, ABA ROLI further modified its sampling procedures to derive samples of refugees at UNHCR’s Zaatari Camp and the Palestinian “camps” Cyber City and King Abdullah Gardens, in order to ensure that results were as representative of the Syrian refugee population as possible. The urban refugee population and camp population differed in some important ways. Those who were able to find accommodation in urban communities may have been more likely to have extended networks that included Syrians or Jordanians or may have been more able to pay for rent, food, and other necessary commodities. Those at camps were likely to be less educated, destitute, and coming into the country with extremely limited resources.

Because NGO and service provider-supplied lists were not available at Zaatari Camp, Cyber City Camp, and King Abdullah Gardens Camp, ABA ROLI used a random route method in those locations. To conduct the sample, the interview teams randomly selected a central starting point within a defined area, such as a sector of the camp, from which they set out along a random route in opposite directions from the starting point. Every nth occupied space was chosen for inclusion in the survey, until 25 interviews had been conducted in a sector. At Cyber City Camp, researchers stopped at every third room and asked adult residents (or the head of household) whether they would be interviewed. At King Abdullah Camp and Zaatari Camp, a similar method was used, with researchers stopping at every fifth tent. Once households were selected, the interviewer proceeded with informed consent and conducted the interview.

B. Subjects

The interview teams interviewed one adult person per household in the sample. Adult household members who were present at home at the time the household was contacted for the study were asked whether a household member was willing to be interviewed. If so, all adults above 18 years of age were listed within the household, and, using a Kish grid, the interview teams selected one adult at random to be interviewed. Past surveys conducted using a similar methodology found that the male heads of household may be more likely to nominate themselves for interview. ABA ROLI thus chose to randomize respondent selection using a Kish grid to reach women and other members of the household who may otherwise have been excluded or less willing to participate if they were not chosen at random.
C. Interviews

All interviews were conducted from January 28, 2013 until July 23, 2013. In general, interviews were conducted at the office of an NGO or service provider or the respondent’s place of residence. Respondents could choose to remain anonymous or provide their names.

In parallel with producing this study, one of the primary objectives of this project was to build capacity for human rights documentation in the region. At the start of the investigation, international investigators conducted interviews through translators, working together with Jordanian investigators. Jordanian and Lebanese investigators then conducted the majority of the interviews after receiving training in core principles and survey methodology. ABA ROLI was responsible for supervising the interview process, and reviewing surveys for completeness and for accuracy of recording.

D. Ethical Considerations

ABA ROLI worked to maximize interviewees’ privacy by seeking to have only the respondent, translator (where applicable), and interviewer present at interviews. However, it was the decision of the respondent and his/her family as to whether the interview was conducted with only the respondent present, or with other members of the household in attendance. The interview teams explained the purpose of the interview and procedure of the research. They also requested consent for participation in the interview, and informed respondents that participation was completely voluntary and they could terminate the interview at any time. In order to protect the identity of respondents from public disclosure, the interview teams followed specific procedures, including referring to interviews by a code number rather than a name in order to protect anonymity. The interview teams also informed participants that their identities would remain confidential and guaranteed that information would not be released in a way that permitted linking specific individuals to specific responses.

E. Survey Questionnaire

The interview questions were open-ended, in order to obtain the broadest account possible. A preliminary questionnaire was pilot-tested among refugees in Jordan, with subsequent changes incorporated into the final version. As the investigation progressed, a few additional modifications were made to improve the information being collected. The questionnaire was written in English and then translated into Arabic.

The questionnaire opened with basic demographic questions, including the location of the respondent’s home in Syria (respondents were not asked for an exact address) and their date of departure from Syria. This was followed with a series of 15 open-ended questions designed to document the harm suffered by respondents and their families; their reasons for leaving; and incidents both experienced and witnessed which would constitute violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Respondents were also asked three opinion questions at the end of the survey, and given an opportunity to make final remarks.
References to harm encompassed physical or psychological harm, and 40 incident categories were specified for the purpose of collecting quantitative data, including, among other harms, aerial bombing, rocket attack/shelling, arbitrary arrest; detention; abduction; torture; willful or arbitrary killing; and sexual violence. For each harm, the questionnaire included space to document victims’ names, ages, dates of incidents, and perpetrator descriptions. Ten perpetrator codes were specified including, inter alia, SAA, pro-government militias (e.g., Shabiha), Syrian Intelligence, foreigners, rebel militia groups, and jihadist groups. Perpetrator groups have been consolidated for the purposes of the analysis in this report. See Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups, for further details on perpetrator groups. Unknown perpetrators or perpetrators not falling within the previous nine categories were specified as “unknown” or “other,” and further details were included in narrative. Perpetrators’ physical descriptions included information about their uniforms or non-uniform attire or other characteristics identifying the perpetrators’ affiliation. Several questions sought to identify the intent of the perpetrators’ actions or command responsibility. In many cases, even where the respondent specified the perpetrator, it was noted on their survey if the details provided were insufficient or ambiguous.

Respondents were also asked whether their property (including homes, businesses, and personal property) had been damaged, destroyed, or looted and whether their villages had been attacked and/or destroyed and if so, to what extent. Respondents were asked whether they had witnessed these incidents. Where the respondent did not witness the attack or incident, it was noted, and the source of information regarding the incident detailed was explained. The targeting of civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, clinics, schools, mosques, churches, and food stores was additionally recorded as these are generally seen as “protected” locations under international humanitarian law. For further discussion, see 4(B)(vii), Bombardment of Civilian Objects.

The final three survey questions were qualitative. Respondents were asked, in an open-ended way, whether attacks targeted particular groups or types of people, or whether particular groups or types of people were spared. The final question asked the respondents to specify if they would seek any redress for the harm or losses suffered, and if so, what type of redress. This question was intended to inform possibilities for a post-conflict transition.

The survey also recorded additional demographic details, including the refugee’s ethnic background and religion. The survey elicited interviewer observations about the usefulness of the questionnaire, the comprehension level of the refugee, the environment in which the interview was conducted, and evidence of torture or other abuse. In appropriate cases, respondents were also asked if they would be willing to be contacted for future investigation or for psycho-social assistance. The grid for field coding, event, and perpetrator codes were listed in the survey. The team developed standardized definitions for all codes based on international treaties and laws applicable in the context of Syria, and developed strict guidelines to ensure that all investigators coded incidents of harm in the same manner.

F. Standard of Proof

ABA ROLI applied the following standard of proof to questionnaire responses: there must be “reasonable grounds to believe that incidents occurred as described” (the reasonable belief standard).
For further discussion of the *reasonable belief* standard, see Section (4)(A), Graphical Comparative Analysis of Harms Suffered by Households Surveyed. Documentation of respondents’ general perceptions and reasons for leaving were not required to meet the *reasonable belief* standard; they are discussed separately in this report. See Section 4(I)(iii), Comparative Analysis: Perceptions and Reasons for Leaving.

**G. Data Entry and Analysis**

All data was entered into Microsoft Excel. Data analysis was done using STATA 13, a statistics software program commonly used for analyzing survey results.

**H. Definitions**

For the purposes of coding and analysis of data, terms describing incidents were defined according to international human rights law and international humanitarian law standards.

**I. Survey Response Rate and Population Size**

ABA ROLI interviewed a total of 884 household representatives of the 1,200 households initially targeted for this survey. The average household size was 6.9 members. Of the 884 interviews, 812 interviews were conducted using the sampling methodology described above. Of 794 refugee households in Jordan who were randomly selected to participate, 528 participated in the study (a response rate of 66.49%). Of the 266 household representatives who did not participate, the majority of them (196 households) were not available because their phones were not working properly or because an incorrect phone number was listed in service providers’ registries. Several interviews could not be conducted because the selected interviewee was sick or did not show up, or lived too far away to travel to the interview site. Of the 1,101 refugee household representatives of the sample in Lebanon, 284 participated in the study (a response rate of 25.8%). The majority of the 817 household representatives who did not participate (697) were unavailable because, as in the Jordan sample, their phones were not working properly, an incorrect phone number was listed for the household, or, in the case of one subgroup, the majority of those excluded from the survey had left Syria before March 2011. Some respondents declined to participate due to fear for their security, because they were not available due to work commitments, because it was inconvenient, or simply because they were not interested in doing the survey. Overall, religious minorities were less responsive to the survey (See Section 6(A), Challenges in Reaching Diverse Populations). Due to the high non-response rates, the resulting survey data is insufficient to allow for statistical inference. For this reason, conclusions regarding the sample are limited to 812 households, with an average of 6.9 members, or a refugee population of 5,602. The following graphic, Graphic 10, presents the numbers of households targeted in the survey, divided by country and by participation.
J. Survey Respondent Demographics and Characteristics

The following graphic, Graphic 11, presents the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. Respondents’ ages ranged from 18 to 93, with a median age of 34 and a mean age of 37. Over half (54.2%) of the respondents were women and 44.8% were men. The ethnic and religious homogeneity of the population is reflected by the fact that nearly all respondents identified themselves as Arab (86.8%) and nearly all identified themselves as Sunni Muslim (89.8%). The educational diversity of respondents is illustrated in their different number of years of schooling, from 0 years (6.7%), 1 to 3 years (2.6%), 4 to 6 years (27.2%), 7-8 years (15.5%), 9-12 years (31.6%), to more than 12 years (11.7%). Of the 812 households surveyed, 65.02% were from locations in Jordan and 34.98% were from Lebanon.
**Graphic 11. Characteristics of Syrian Refugee Survey Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Characteristics</th>
<th>Number Responding (N=812)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>(44.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>(54.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(1.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>(86.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syriac/Assyrian</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>(4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(0.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/No answer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Muslim</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>(89.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>(9.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education (years/type)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>(6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(2.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>(27.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>(15.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>(31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>(11.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic School</td>
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<td>(0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/ No answer</td>
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<td>(2.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refugee Households</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>(65.02%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>(34.98%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Challenges and Limitations

This section discusses the methodological limitations of this survey’s dataset, highlighting the challenges in implementing a study in emergency-affected environments, as well as demonstrating how ABA ROLI ensured the accuracy and credibility of the findings in this report.

A. Challenges in Reaching Diverse Populations

A few targeted locations within Jordan and Lebanon were not reachable during the timeframe of the project. ABA ROLI originally planned to conduct approximately 200 surveys in Zaatari Camp in Jordan; however, after conducting 18 surveys in Zaatari Camp, civil unrest in the camp prevented the team from completing a sample there. ABA ROLI was unable to survey populations in the North Lebanon Governorate and the northeastern portion of the Beqaa Governorate due to outbreaks of violence there during the planned survey period; however, the team implemented surveys in adjoining areas in order to reach similar populations. This is standard protocol for sampling in conflict areas.

Recognizing that refugees were likely to have crossed into a neighboring country according to its proximity to their place of origin, ABA ROLI planned to survey refugee populations in Turkey in addition to Jordan and Lebanon to ensure diverse geographic representation. Logistical and security constraints, including restrictions on access to refugee camps in southern Turkey, prevented ABA ROLI from implementing the survey in Turkey within the framework of this project. Implementation of the survey in other host countries, such as Iraq and Egypt, was not within the scope of the project. Consistent with the methodology adopted in earlier projects (documenting incidents in Kosovo and South Sudan), ABA ROLI did not design this survey to be implemented inside Syria, due to security concerns for both respondents and the research team. Consequently, populations from the Governorates of Aleppo, Deir Al-Zour, Idlib, and Raqqa are likely underrepresented, and the Governorates of Latakia, Quneitra, Suweida, and Tartus are not represented at all. Lack of representation of certain governorates (e.g., Latakia, Suweida, and Tartus) is also due to the challenges in reaching hidden populations of religious minorities that represent the majority of the population in those governorates.

ABA ROLI invested significant time and resources in ensuring that Syria’s ethnic and religious diversity was represented in the survey by reaching out to NGOs, service providers, and minority populations throughout Lebanon and Jordan. It proved extremely difficult to reach certain minority communities such as Alawite, Shiite, and Druze populations due to a range of factors: the lack of concentration of certain minority populations in surveyed areas, the difficulty of identifying service providers to these groups, and their reluctance to come forward due to an increased sense of insecurity because of their minority status. The higher financial status of certain minorities means that they are less likely to seek assistance through service providers and are therefore difficult to reach. Moreover, certain religious minorities, notably Alawites and to some extent other Shiites, were displaced primarily within Syria and did not cross in large numbers into neighboring countries. Despite the challenges, ABA ROLI recorded 51 surveys of those who identified themselves as Palestinians and 73 surveys of those who identified their religion as Christianity, representing diverse Christian populations, including Syriacs and Assyrians. ABA ROLI was unable to record any interviews with individuals who identified themselves as Alawite,
Druze, or Shiite (Ismaili), although interviewers noted a few cases in which a respondent may have been from a minority but did not identify as such. The absence of representation of these groups in the quantitative study may have resulted in the under-reporting of violations by Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

Fear or mistrust affected responses across all communities, but appeared to be more prevalent among minority populations. In total, about 47% of the individuals invited to participate in the survey agreed to participate. In looking at the response rate across groups, however, Christians and Palestinians were the least responsive. Moreover, although populations not reached cannot be quantified in the survey data, it is important to note that while Alawites, Druze, and Shiite families or groups were located informally through community contacts, ABA ROLI was unable to obtain any responses from those groups. ABA ROLI was able to secure responses from Christian groups by coordinating with recognized organizations that were trusted within those communities.

Across all demographics, but again, more notably among religious and ethnic minorities, fear of reporting may also have impacted the level of detail a respondent was willing to share about an incident. In many cases, it may have resulted in the respondent refraining from identifying a perpetrator, even when he or she had witnessed an incident and admitted to knowing who the perpetrator was. Respondents also demonstrated varying comfort levels depending on the community or area in which they were living in the host country and on their level of comfort with the service provider. Nonetheless, the team determined that the majority of responses were unreserved and many respondents expressed relief at having their voices and stories heard.

Recognizing that the majority of refugees contacted via service providers represented populations of lower to lower-middle income status, ABA ROLI also sought to address gaps in the representation of middle to higher income groups. Addressing this gap proved difficult due to the lack of an entry point to these communities. ABA ROLI was able to conduct surveys with some university students representing middle to higher income groups; however, these did not form part of the quantitative sample as they were not obtained using the random sampling method. Education levels of respondents in the large samples were also not representative of the overall population of Syria as many survey respondents had completed only primary schooling or less. However, it is worth noting that information provided by respondents who had completed a higher level of education, such as high school, college, or graduate school, did not contradict information provided by respondents with less formal education, and the specific experiences of certain professional groups (such as medical professionals) was captured in narratives.

This study is concerned with the level and frequency of harm experienced by individuals who have left Syria, rather than with a tabulation of incidents that occurred in Syria. There was a small risk of measuring the same event twice by interviewing multiple members of the same household (when using service provider lists) or by having different households report the same event. Respondents typically informed the interviewer if a member of the same household had already been interviewed and in such cases, a second interview did not proceed. Although multiple respondents may have reported the same witnessed event (such as attacks on demonstrators or large scale executions), the harm experienced by each individual was unique and the effect of any overlap on the data set is minimal.
B. Challenges in Documenting Certain Categories of Harm

Certain categories of harm are likely to have been under-reported in this study. First-hand or proximate reports of SGBV were very difficult to obtain via the random sampling approach. Societal and legal norms deter reporting of SGBV. Extra-marital sexual relations, even when involuntary, may be perceived as shameful for both victims and their families. This is compounded in a conflict setting, given the nature of the perpetrator. Also, the survey was deliberately designed to be non-leading so as to obtain the most credible accounts of harm suffered and to ensure reporting of a broad range of incidents. In order to obtain accounts of SGBV, it would be necessary to structure the interview questions and environment towards that goal and to conduct several interviews in order to gain the trust of the interviewee and be able to provide the necessary support. That was not possible in the context of documenting a broad range of harms based on a single interview. Gender dynamics are also critical in obtaining open accounts from victims of SGBV. To that end, effort was taken to ensure that female respondents were interviewed by female members of the research team.

Survivors of other forms of trauma may also have declined to respond to the survey at a higher rate than respondents who had not suffered trauma, thus resulting in under-reporting of some of the most serious incidents. Some potential respondents who had been subject to torture, for example, may have declined to be interviewed due to a heightened fear of being questioned and an aversion to reliving the experience of arrest, detention, and torture, which may cause secondary trauma. Executions and deaths in custody are also likely to have been under-reported due to the fact that they are rarely witnessed and, even when they are witnessed, fear may deter reporting. There were also many reports of persons having vanished. These were not included under any of the specific codes as it was not possible to determine whether the individual was arrested and held incommunicado by the government or an affiliate, kidnapped by gangs or opposition forces, or killed by any number of possible actors.126

There were also incidents which have been captured in the narrative but were not reported as distinct incidents in the quantitative study (e.g., reports of the burning of houses and other property, as distinct from bombardment or ground attacks). Also, the practice of positioning military objectives within civilian areas was not quantified, but is discussed in detail in the narrative.127

C. Perpetrator Identification

Meeting the reasonable belief standard in relation to perpetrator identification was a significant challenge. Perpetrator identity was coded as “unknown” in many cases because the respondent did not provide sufficient identifying information, the respondent demonstrated bias in his or her identification of the perpetrator, the circumstances of the incident were such that the perpetrator could not have been identified, or the incident was not witnessed. Researchers identified the following patterns in statements relating to perpetrator identification (descriptions of the actors referred to below are provided in Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups).

First-hand or proximate reports of SGBV were rare; a methodology specifically aimed at assessing SGBV may be necessary to survey of that harm.
• Overall, it was more difficult for respondents to meet the *reasonable belief* standard in relation to anti-regime or “other” armed groups (non-aligned groups) than in relation to Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. When responses regarding perpetrator identification did not meet the *reasonable belief* standard, such as when the respondent provided a biased account, was unable to provide a description, or did not actually see the perpetrator, the perpetrator was coded as unknown. This may have resulted in under-reporting of violations by anti-regime and non-aligned groups. SAA and uniformed security personnel were easier to identify than any other actors in this conflict. Shabiha and security personnel in civilian clothing were identifiable in many cases by association with uniformed personnel and by context. Because Syria’s population has had significant pre-conflict exposure to the SAA and Syrian Security and Intelligence Forces, respondents were often able to recognize and distinguish among groups. That said, some respondents experienced trouble distinguishing among different regime actors and affiliates, particularly when multiple groups were acting together. For that reason, the study combines Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups into one section and all Anti-Regime Armed Groups into another section for the purposes of the overall analysis, although particular groups are identified as appropriate.

• Aerial bombardment was automatically attributed to the Syrian Arab Air Forces as no other actor in this conflict has demonstrated the capacity to conduct air assaults. The Syrian Arab Air Forces was coded in the same category as SAA. But, Syrian Air Force Intelligence was coded along with other intelligence agencies under “Syrian Intelligence.”

• Over the course of the study, respondents increasingly referred to “Popular Committees.” While some respondents referred to them as neighborhood residents who took up arms only for the purpose of defending their neighborhoods, others characterized them as Shabiha and reported incidents indicating that they were combatants. Incidents were coded on a case-by-case basis, based on facts reported, rather than based on broad characterizations.

• As the conflict continues, the map of Anti-Regime Armed Groups becomes increasingly complex. However, overall, survey responses did not reflect this complexity. The terms FSA or “Free Army” were used generically to describe Anti-Regime Armed Groups, while Jabhat Al-Nusra was referred to generically to describe Salafist-jihadist groups. Moreover, respondents frequently attributed acts to the FSA even where the perpetrator description (dress, insignia, etc.) was more indicative of a Salafist-jihadist group. Although interviewers attempted to distinguish FSA and similar groups from Salafist-jihadist groups, it was not always possible to do so. Accordingly, incidents attributed to the FSA and other Anti-Regime Armed Groups, including Salafist-jihadist groups, are consolidated for the purposes of the quantitative dataset. However, the narrative uses group names as stated by respondents, so long as the respondent’s identification met the *reasonable belief* standard.

• Moreover, because of the difficulty respondents experienced in identifying and distinguishing Anti-Regime Armed Groups, and because of the presence of criminal gangs in the country, some incident reports were coded as “perpetrator unknown.”
D. Respondent Characteristics

In some cases, the respondent may not have understood a question or misread the intent of a question. If it was possible, the interviewer attempted to explain the question without leading the respondent, or asked the question in a different way. In some cases, no response was recorded where the question was not understood.

Many respondents were not familiar with weaponry and unable to identify arms, differentiate types of rockets or aerial attacks, or understand how destruction had occurred (via air, ground rocket, or sniper). In instances when the respondent could not sufficiently describe the event, it was not coded. In some cases, the harm (e.g., destruction of a home) could be recorded without documenting the cause.

A large number of respondents indicated a preference towards Anti-Regime Armed Groups, particularly the FSA, and a small number of respondents indicated a preference towards government forces. This could be because of internal bias or a political allegiance. When interviewers felt this was the case, based on something the respondent said or a gut feeling, they noted this perceived preference in their “interviewer comments.” In many cases, this rose to the level of bias, and the incidents reported were reviewed by the interviewer and the team leader in that light. However, in the vast majority of cases, bias was not assessed to impact the verity of the incidents reported, but rather, the respondent’s perception of who committed the offense. In such cases, the incident and harm was recorded, but the perpetrator was recorded as “unknown.” This was extremely common in the case of property destruction where, for example, battles occurred in residential areas between the SAA and FSA, and respondents attributed the destruction of their property to one party (the SAA where the respondent was “pro-FSA” and the FSA where the respondent was “pro-regime”).

As necessary, surveys or portions thereof were not recorded because the interviewer and reviewer had reason to believe that the respondent or responses lacked credibility. This may have been due to one or more of a range of factors, including overarching bias, inconsistencies in testimony, statements that did not fit together or that were prima facie implausible, or due to a lack of supporting details.

E. Interviewer Characteristics

While complete objectivity is an ideal, it is nearly impossible to reach, given that any research is the work of individuals who fundamentally come from different frameworks of understanding. Shortly after completion of the pilot, interviewers were provided with a standard methodology and interviewer training focused on drawing out as much information from a respondent as possible and the importance of being a neutral listener. Surveys were also reviewed with a view, inter alia, towards eliminating or diminishing bias. Nonetheless, interviewer bias and variations in interview style will have resulted in inconsistencies in recording and coding of events, and results should be read in this light. Errors in coding, data recording, and data entry may also have impacted the quantitative results; however, data was reviewed at the coding stage and data entry stage in an effort to avoid and correct errors.
Annex A. Regional Implications of the Syria Conflict

A. Jordan

Since the start of the conflict, Jordan has maintained diplomatic ties with Syria and has argued for an inclusive transitional process. In the last 12 months, it has also facilitated some military support for the armed opposition, in cooperation with other countries in the core Friends of Syria Group. The Jordanian government’s main concerns regarding the Syrian conflict are to avoid a spillover of hostilities, to limit the growth of radical Islamist groups within Jordan, and to quell local tensions related to the influx of refugees from Syria.

As of December 2013, more than 560,000 Syrians are registered as refugees or were awaiting registration in Jordan, but government estimates put the total number of refugees at 600,000. Jordan is exercising strict control over Syrian refugee camp populations. Zaatari Camp is the largest refugee camp in Jordan, currently host to 114,000 refugees. Smaller refugee communities also live in King Abdullah Gardens and Murijep Al-Fhoud. The remainder resides within local communities. In addition, approximately 9,000 PRS have entered Jordan and are seeking assistance from UNRWA. According to UNRWA, as of October 2013, 200 PRS are held in Cyber City, a government facility in Ramtha, along with 200 (non-Palestinian) Syrian refugees; they are not permitted to leave the compound. Since October 2012, Jordan has closed its borders to PRS. The influx of refugees adds to preexisting tensions related to non-Jordanians, linked to legal questions of nationality and exercise of rights, as well as concerns regarding resources and the economy.

B. Lebanon

The Lebanese government has assumed a neutral stance in relation to Syria, but Lebanon’s two main political blocks have aligned with opposing sides of the conflict. The Lebanese Future Movement, the leading party in the “March 14” block, is providing critical support in arming opposition militias, while Hezbollah, the dominant party in the “March 8” alliance, is overtly engaged inside Syrian territory in support of the Assad regime. As Lebanon’s internal sectarian tensions meld with increased engagement of Lebanese actors inside Syria, sporadic violence has occurred on Lebanese soil. Flash points exist along parts of the Lebanese-Syrian border, in Tripoli (Lebanon’s northern capital), in the southern suburbs of Beirut (a Hezbollah stronghold), and in the city of Saida, less than 40 kilometers south of Beirut. On November 19, 2013, two suicide bombers attacked the Iranian Embassy in Beirut; the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, an Al-Qaeda linked group, claimed responsibility for the attacks and threatened further attacks until Hezbollah withdraws its fighters from Syria. Lebanon hosts the largest proportion of Syrian refugees, adding to its already substantial and socially fragile refugee population. More than 835,000 Syrian refugees were registered or awaiting registration with the UNHCR as of December 2013. Lebanese government estimates put the number of refugees at one million (not including PRS), as there are many refugees, particularly those from minority communities or with greater financial resources, who are electing not to register with the UNHCR. No official camps have been erected for Syrian refugees in Lebanon; instead, they reside within Lebanese communities, usually in apartments shared among multiple families in order to be able to afford the higher rental costs in Lebanon, as well
as in unofficial tent communities. Place of residence is determined by a range of factors, including, among others, proximity of the region to the refugees’ home in Syria, the existence of familial ties in the community, religious orientation of the community, work opportunities, and the cost of living. Lebanon is also host to more than 66,000 PRS, who are mostly residing in already overcrowded Palestinian camps and communities.\textsuperscript{138}

C. Turkey

Turkey’s initial efforts to encourage reform and dialogue in Syria were rejected by the Assad regime, leading Turkey to support the Syrian opposition and advocate for the removal of Assad. Turkey has hosted opposition meetings, sought to lead international efforts through formation of the Friends of Syria, and allowed the FSA to set up headquarters in strategic locations in Turkey. Turkey’s main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party, has declared its support for the Assad regime. As with Lebanon and Jordan, the conflict in Syria has immediate repercussions for Turkey. Notably, growing Kurdish autonomy in Syria has propelled the Turkish government to work towards a political solution for its own conflict with the Kurds. In May 2013, two car bombs in Reyhanli, a city in southern Turkey, killed 46 people and led to violence between Turkish residents and Syrian refugees.\textsuperscript{139} Several Turkish nationals were arrested and charged in relation to the bombings, and the Turkish government openly accused the Syrian regime of involvement in the incident. Southern Turkey hosts the majority of Turkey’s estimated 700,000 Syrian refugees. More than 536,000 Syrian refugees are registered or awaiting registration with UNHCR in Turkey as of December 2013.\textsuperscript{140}

D. Israel

Israel has asserted that its greatest concern in relation to the current conflict is that large-scale weapons transfers to the Syrian regime could be used against Israel by the regime or its allies, such as Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{141} Israel has thus ostensibly limited direct engagement in the conflict to attacks on weapons transfers, including four strikes inside Syria in 2013. The borders between Israel and Syria have been closed since 1967, and Israel has maintained that it will not allow Syrian refugees to cross into Israel, although it has allowed a small number of injured across its borders for medical treatment.\textsuperscript{142}

E. Iraq

Nouri Al-Maliki’s government in Iraq has permitted Iran to use its airspace and land routes for delivery of weapons and supplies to Syria, and has reportedly provided medical assistance to Syrian regime fighters.\textsuperscript{143} Financial support has also reportedly been extended alongside the provision of discounted fuel.\textsuperscript{144} However, the Iraqi government under Al-Maliki has maintained a publicly neutral posture, calling for dialogue between Assad and the Syrian opposition and abstaining from the vote taken in November 2011 to suspend Syria’s membership in the Arab League. Al-Maliki’s government fears that fragmentation in Syria could have a ripple effect in Iraq. Iraq’s Kurdish population is vying for greater autonomy over territories and resources, and the President of the Iraqi Kurdish Region, Massoud Barzani, is publicly supporting Syria’s Kurds against both Assad and the Syrian opposition. At the same time, Sunni tribes in Iraq’s western provinces are supportive of the Syrian uprising; fighters and supplies have been crossing from Anbar province into Syria, and armed groups inside Iraq have established a
“Free Iraqi Army.” Conflict in Syria has also led to the return of tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees who had fled to Syria since 2003, and 207,053 Syrian refugees are registered or awaiting registration in Iraq as of December 2013.\textsuperscript{145}

F. Other Regional Actors

Regional engagement in the conflict does not stop with Syria’s immediate neighbors. A long-time ally of the Assad regime, Iran has reportedly provided technical assistance to Syrian Security and Intelligence Agencies on methods for curtailing protests by monitoring and controlling the Internet and cell phone networks.\textsuperscript{146} Iranian security personnel have also deployed in Syria, though not in large numbers, and in recent months, Iran has supported the formation of the NDF to protect regime strongholds.\textsuperscript{147} Simultaneously, Iran has advocated for a multilateral regional initiative in support of a political resolution to the conflict.

Qatar, alongside Turkey, has provided strong financial support to the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as to more radical, jihadist groups. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have aligned themselves with the US and Europe’s approach, supporting the FSA and, in turn, the SNC, and have also extended support to non-FSA Salafist groups. Private donors from the Gulf, predominantly from Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, are also providing contributions to selected rebel groups.\textsuperscript{148}
Annex B. International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict

A. Introduction: Applicable Areas of Law

This report does not seek to address the compliance of parties in the Syrian conflict with the country’s domestic laws, but instead addresses the actions of parties in the Syrian conflict in the context of principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law. Violations of these standards can give rise to legal responsibility on the part of the Syrian state, as well as individual legal responsibility.

i. The Application of International Humanitarian Law

On July 15, 2012, the ICRC classified the conflict in Syria as a non-international armed conflict. The ICRC’s finding indicates that international humanitarian law applies throughout the country and governs the conduct of the parties engaged in hostilities.\textsuperscript{149}

The ICRC makes legal determinations about the nature of conflicts to encourage parties to a dispute to comply with international humanitarian law, and so the ICRC may act in accordance with applicable rules of international law when carrying out its humanitarian mandate. ICRC classifications are not binding on UN member states. However, they are influential among the international community, and states parties to the Geneva Conventions must consider the ICRC’s findings in good faith in light of the organization’s key role in the development of international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{150}

The ICRC uses two factors in determining whether hostilities rise to the level of a non-international armed conflict: (1) the intensity of the violence (e.g., whether hostilities are “of a collective character,” or whether “the government is obliged to use military force against the insurgents, instead of mere police forces”); and (2) the organizational sophistication of the groups involved in the conflict (e.g., whether forces are under a command structure and whether they have the “capacity to sustain military operations”).\textsuperscript{151} When conflicts demonstrate the requisite level of intensity and combatant groups are organized enough to be considered “parties” to a conflict, the ICRC may find that hostilities constitute non-international armed conflict.

Cases of non-international armed conflict are governed by several treaties, in particular, Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II. Common Article III is a more general, broadly applicable text, which has been universally ratified and applies to all non-international armed conflicts. Additional Protocol II applies under more restricted circumstances; further, Syria has not ratified it. In some cases, such as conflicts that take place between the government and armed groups, both Common Article III and Additional Protocol II will be applicable. In other cases, where conflict is solely between armed groups, only Common Article III will apply. Further, both Common Article III and Additional Protocol II require certain standards of behavior from parties engaged in conflict, regardless of whether those parties are state or non-state groups, so long as the state has ratified the treaty.\textsuperscript{152}

Article 1 of Additional Protocol II indicates that the Protocol applies to non-international armed conflicts that take place between the government and armed groups only where: (1) the conflict takes place “in
the territory of a High Contracting Party”; (2) the conflict pits the government against armed groups; (3) the dissident or armed groups act “under responsible command”; and (4) the parties to the conflict exercise control over territory, allowing for “sustained and concerted military operations.” When the conflict does not demonstrate these specific requirements of conflict within state territory, responsible command of armed groups, or control over territory, as well as in cases when a state has not ratified Additional Protocol II, only Common Article III will be applicable.

Although Syria has not ratified Additional Protocol II, there is a strong case to be made for application of much of the Protocol II as customary international law in the context of Syria. Customary international law refers to those legal obligations that arise from consistent state practice (as opposed to obligations that stem from treaties or formal agreements) that states undertake out of a sense of legal obligation (as opposed to mere expediency or habit). In order for “acceptance as law” (opinion juris) to be evident, it is widely agreed that customary international law is only formed when there is widespread state practice consistent with the rule coupled with a belief indicating that the practice is required, prohibited, or allowed as a matter of law. A 2006 study by the ICRC, along with a subsequent comprehensive database of customary international humanitarian law, discusses customary law issues arising from Additional Protocol II. This encompasses many, but not all, of the issues raised in Additional Protocol II. This includes: protected persons (e.g., civilians, especially women and children, persons hors de combat, and medical and religious personnel); protected sites (e.g., medical units, religious and cultural sites); prohibitions against starvation and attacks against objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population; the obligation to protect persons deprived of their liberty; the prohibition on the forced movement of civilians; and other issues. Presuming that the Syrian conflict meets Additional Protocol II’s threshold stipulations, this report discusses the application of some of the treaty’s protections and prohibitions as customary international law, binding within Syria.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What are the consequences of customary international law in the Syrian conflict?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Customary international law is comprised of norms that are widespread in practice and which states consider obligatory as a matter of law. Many provisions of Additional Protocol II, which Syria has not ratified, apply to the Syrian conflict because much of that treaty’s requirements are considered customary international law.</td>
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Common Article III imposes minimum standards in all cases of non-international armed conflict. Thus, because Syria is a state party to the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Common Article III applies to the current conflict. Common Article III provides baseline standards for any and all parties engaged in the Syrian conflict, as well as minimum protections for non-combatants and persons hors de combat, including prohibitions on torture and cruel treatment, hostage-taking, outrages upon personal dignity (in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment), and extra-judicial executions of civilians. Common Article III also requires that the wounded and sick are cared for without discrimination. Persons protected by Common Article III are those “persons taking no active part in the hostilities,” including civilians and combatants who have “disengaged from their fighting function,” or who have become hors de combat, due to sickness, surrender, or any other cause. In order for combatants to be considered as having “disengage[d] from their fighting function,” for the purpose of determining the
legality of targeting them, the standard is that they must have laid down their arms. Mere suspension of combat is insufficient.\textsuperscript{163}

<table>
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<th>Persons who are protected under Common Article III:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Civilians</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Persons \textit{hors de combat}: people who have disengaged from fighting (due to sickness, surrender, or any other cause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals who accompany armed groups but are not directly involved in hostilities: e.g., chaplains and medical personnel</td>
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</table>

Combatants from non-state groups and the state alike are obliged to adhere to international humanitarian law. Persons who are trained, equipped, and involved in preparing and executing the operations of an armed group are deemed combatants. It should be noted that some individuals who accompany armed groups but are not directly involved in hostilities (e.g., religious and medical personnel) are considered non-combatants because they do not engage in combat.\textsuperscript{164}

It should additionally be noted that international humanitarian law prohibits the use of several types of weapons, including some weapons that have been employed in the Syrian conflict. According to the ICRC and other international humanitarian law experts, weapons prohibited in non-international armed conflict under customary international law include: biological weapons;\textsuperscript{165} chemical weapons;\textsuperscript{166} booby-traps;\textsuperscript{167} cluster bombs;\textsuperscript{168} expanding or exploding bullets;\textsuperscript{169} landmines or incendiary weapons when not used within certain parameters;\textsuperscript{170} poison and poisoned weapons;\textsuperscript{171} and weapons with the primary effect of injuring by fragments that are not detectable by X-rays.\textsuperscript{172} UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has stated unambiguously that the use of chemical weapons is a violation of the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, to which Syria is a state party.\textsuperscript{173} Moreover, on September 14, 2013, Syria acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, which also prohibits the use of chemical weapons, including sarin gas.\textsuperscript{174}
The following weapons are prohibited in a non-international armed conflict:

- Biological weapons
- Booby-traps
- Chemical weapons (e.g., sarin gas)
- Cluster bombs
- Expanding or exploding bullets
- Landmines or incendiary weapons when not used within certain parameters
- Poison and poisoned weapons
- Weapons with the primary effect of injuring by fragments that are not detectable by X-rays

ii. The Application of International Human Rights Law

Even in an armed conflict where international humanitarian law applies, it is a commonly held belief that international human rights law remains in effect with regards to government obligations, and many of these requirements apply to non-state actors as well.\(^\text{175}\) The fundamental principles of international human rights law are codified in a series of international treaties and instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ICCPR, CAT, and CRC.\(^\text{176}\) Under international human rights law, states have an obligation not only to protect individuals from abuses of these human rights, but also to take positive action to ensure that citizens and others within their territory and jurisdiction are able to enjoy these rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International law source</th>
<th>When does it apply to the Syrian conflict?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Article III</td>
<td>Common Article III applies throughout the Syrian conflict.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Protocol II</td>
<td>Syria has not ratified this Protocol; however, many of its provisions apply to Syria throughout the conflict as a function of customary international law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>Syria has ratified this treaty; it applies at all times. Some of its protections may be derogated from during public emergencies, so long as these curtailments are limited. However, its protections of the right to life, freedom from torture, inhuman treatment, and degrading treatment are non-derogable. Further, Syria has not indicated any intent to derogate, as would be required by the ICCPR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Syria has ratified the CAT; it applies at all times. Derogation is not permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Syria has ratified the CRC; it applies at all times. Derogation is not permitted.</td>
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As Syria is a state party to the ICCPR, the CAT, and the CRC, all Syrian Government Forces are bound to respect the obligations those treaties impose. The same obligations apply to Affiliated Groups. Additionally, it is increasingly accepted among the international community that non-state actors are obligated to respect many of the obligations that these treaties impose, particularly where those actors “exercise some degree of control over a given territory and its population.”

### iii. The Application of International Criminal Law

Both government actors and non-state actors who violate customary international humanitarian law may potentially be held accountable for their crimes under international criminal law, that body of law that ascribes individual criminal responsibility. Parties to the Syrian conflict who commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide may potentially be prosecuted for those violations of international criminal law before the ICC, to the extent that the Court has jurisdiction. Examples of the types of crimes prosecutable before the ICC include willful killing, torture and other inhumane treatment, deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, the taking of hostages, and using human shields. The attempted commission of war crimes, as well as aiding and abetting their commission, may also result in individual criminal liability. Furthermore, any commanders and civilian leaders who knew or should have known about their subordinates’ perpetration of war crimes, and who failed to take appropriate measures to prevent and punish the perpetrators, can be held individually criminally liable under the doctrine of superior responsibility.

There is no international tribunal with jurisdiction over the situation in Syria at present. Syria is not a party to the Rome Statute; therefore, the ICC can only obtain jurisdiction over crimes committed in Syria if the UNSC refers the situation to the Court. Conflicts in Libya and Darfur have successfully been referred to the ICC in this manner. Moreover, although Syria has not ratified the Rome Statute, it has signed it. As such, it is required to refrain from “acts which would defeat the object and purpose” of the treaty.

### B. International Law Standards Applying to Violations by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups

#### i. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

The arbitrary deprivation of liberty in either peacetime or armed conflict is prohibited by customary international law and treaty law (including humanitarian and human rights law treaties). For the purposes of this report, arbitrary arrest is defined as an arrest by a party to the Syrian conflict where one or more of the following conditions is not followed: detaining someone with a legal basis; informing an arrested person of the reasons for their arrest; bringing the arrested person promptly before a judge or similar independent body; and providing the detainee with an opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of detention.

Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions, as well as its Additional Protocols I and II, mandate that civilians and persons hors de combat be treated humanely. It is generally considered that the arbitrary
deprivation of liberty does not comply with this requirement and is, therefore, in violation of these obligations.

Article 9 of the ICCPR, to which Syria is a party, also holds that “[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention ... Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him, ... [and] anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release.” These are the minimum requirements for prompt notification of charges for individuals who have been arrested or detained. In addition, the Human Rights Committee, which monitors the implementation of the ICCPR in individual countries, has interpreted ICCPR art. 9(1) to mean that “if an individual is arrested or detained on grounds which are not clearly established in domestic legislation,” then the arresting power has committed a breach of human rights. Therefore, arrests made in Syria that do not comport with Syrian law also constitute violations of individual rights under the ICCPR.

The prohibition of prolonged arbitrary deprivation of liberty is part of the peremptory norms of international law. The absolute prohibition of arbitrary detention is non-derogable under certain international law sources. Additionally, hostage-taking is prohibited under customary international law as a war crime, and is reflected in Common Article III and Article 34 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The taking of hostages is defined as “the seizure or detention of a person (the hostage), combined with threatening to kill, to injure or to continue to detain the hostage, in order to compel a third party to do or to abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage.” The ICC’s definition of this crime adds that the demand for third-party behavior could be compelled by release of the hostage or safety of the hostage. In cases where individuals were detained or seized with the explicit or implicit intention of inducing a family member to come forward or to receive payment in return for releasing the detained person, those seizures and detentions may qualify as hostage-taking. In order to qualify as hostage-taking instead of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, the perpetrators must have the specific intent to induce a third party to act or abstain from acting in relation to the release or safety of the hostage.

ii. Torture and Cruel Treatment

Torture is prohibited under customary international law in both international and non-international armed conflict. This prohibition is additionally codified in multiple international instruments. Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions prohibits “cruel treatment and torture” and “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment” of civilians and persons hors de combat. Further, torture and cruel treatment are prohibited by specific provisions of the four Geneva Conventions applicable to international armed conflicts. Specifically, “torture or inhuman treatment” and “willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health” constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions (potentially giving rise to individual criminal responsibility) and are war crimes under the Rome Statute. Additional Protocols I and II recognize the prohibition on torture and outrages upon personal dignity, including humiliating and degrading treatment, as a fundamental guarantee for civilians and persons hors de combat. Torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon
personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, constitute war crimes in non-
international armed conflicts under the Rome Statute, and the Statutes of the International Criminal
Tribunal for Rwanda [hereinafter ICTR] and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{197} Torture is also a crime
against humanity under the Rome Statute when other elements of that offense are satisfied.\textsuperscript{198} The
prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment is included in
international human rights law and is non-derogable under these instruments.\textsuperscript{199} In addition, it is widely
accepted that torture is prohibited under customary international law in both international and non-
international armed conflicts and during peacetime.

For the purposes of this report, torture is defined according to the CAT’s definition:

\textit{Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally
inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person
information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has
committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a
third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or
suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a
public official or other person acting in an official capacity.}\textsuperscript{200}

\underline{iii. Enforced Disappearances}

Enforced disappearance is defined by the Rome Statute as:

The arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or
acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge
that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those
persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a
prolonged period of time.\textsuperscript{201}

Enforced disappearance is a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute.\textsuperscript{202} International
humanitarian law treaties do not specifically refer to the term “enforced disappearance”; however,
enforced disappearances also violate several rules of customary international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{203}
These rules include: the prohibition on arbitrary deprivation of liberty (see Section 4(B)(i), Arbitrary
Arrest and Detention, for a full discussion of these legal issues); the requirement for registration of
persons deprived of their liberty;\textsuperscript{204} and the requirement that each party to a conflict “must take all
feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of armed conflict and to provide
their family members with information it has on their fate.”\textsuperscript{205}

\underline{iv. Willful or Arbitrary Killings}

The willful (i.e., intentional) or arbitrary killing of civilians and all persons \textit{hors de combat} is prohibited
under customary international law in both international and non-international armed conflict. This
prohibition has long been codified and is included in Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions,
which prohibits “violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds” of civilians and
persons *hors de combat*.” Additionally, all four Geneva Conventions consider “willful killing” of protected persons to be a grave breach, potentially giving rise to individual criminal responsibility. Further, Additional Protocols I and II recognize the prohibition on murder, as do the statutes of the ICC, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [hereinafter ICTY], ICTR, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

For the purposes of this report, arbitrary killing by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups includes any deprivation of life perpetrated by an agent of the state or any other person acting under Government authority or with its complicity, tolerance, or acquiescence, but without due judicial process.

The murder of civilians and persons *hors de combat* is also prohibited under international human rights law; the ICCPR, for example requires that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to life.” As a party to the ICCPR, Syria is obligated to respect this right.

The prohibition on arbitrary deprivation of the right to life is non-derogable and, therefore, is applicable at all times, including during non-international armed conflict.

**v. Beatings and Threats of Violence**

All prisoners of war, civilians, and persons *hors de combat* are entitled to humane treatment under international humanitarian law. This protective norm has a long pedigree, finding consistent expression in the Lieber Code, the Brussels Declaration, the Oxford Manual on the Laws of War on Land, the Hague Regulations, Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions, and Additional Protocols I and II. Humane treatment is not specifically defined in customary international humanitarian law, but beatings are addressed in the contexts of prohibitions against corporal punishment, torture, acts of terror, or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Corporal punishment against civilians and persons *hors de combat* is prohibited in the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions, as well as Additional Protocols I and II. Corporal punishment constitutes a war crime in non-international armed conflicts in the Statute for the ICTR and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Similarly, international human rights law sources, including the ICCPR and CAT, have been interpreted as requiring the humane treatment of detainees, including banning corporal punishment and beatings.

**vi. Home Raids**

Home raids and unauthorized searches constitute human rights violations. Article 17 of the ICCPR protects the right to privacy, stating that “[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.” Searches in the home violate this right unless they are carried out lawfully, are restricted to searches for necessary evidence, and do not amount to harassment.

If raids and searches are conducted in order to unlawfully appropriate personal property, and if such property is obtained by combatants, the appropriation constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. It may also constitute the crime of pillage. Pillage is defined as “the forcible taking of
private property by an invading or conquering army from the enemy’s subjects.“\textsuperscript{220} In regards to non-international armed conflict, pillage is prohibited under Additional Protocol II and the Rome Statute.

Customary international humanitarian law has long protected private property from confiscation, as recognized in the Lieber Code, the Brussels Declaration, the Oxford Manual, and Article 46 of the Hague Regulations. Private property may only lawfully be seized in situations of “imperative military necessity.” Seizures of private property also require compensation or restoration in peacetime.\textsuperscript{221} Further, if home raids and searches are conducted as part of a “widespread or systematic attack” against an “identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender … or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law,” any unlawful seizure or destruction of property can possibly constitute the crime of persecution.\textsuperscript{222} For further discussion on prohibitions of unlawful appropriation of property, pillage and persecution, see Section 4(C)(i), Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives.

\textbf{vii. Bombardment of Civilian Objects}

The bombing of civilian objects implicates many varied issues of customary international humanitarian law. Multiple sources dictate that parties to a conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants and therefore between military objectives and civilian objects. Attacks may only be directed against combatants and must not be directed against civilians.\textsuperscript{223} Civilian objects are generally defined in state practice as including: towns, cities, villages, residential areas, dwellings, and schools, as well as civilian means of transportation, hospitals, other medical establishments and medical units, historic monuments, places of worship and cultural property, and the natural environment. These objects only cease to be civilian objects if they have become military objectives,\textsuperscript{224} e.g., if they are co-located with military objectives. Only at that point do those objects lose the protection granted to them by customary international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{225} Civilian objects are otherwise off limits for attacks. Additionally, attacks against cultural property (including buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, or charitable purposes, or historic monuments) constitute war crimes, as do attacks against medical units and transports, hospitals, neutral zones, safety zones, and humanitarian relief objects.\textsuperscript{226} Attacks against objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population are also strictly prohibited by Additional Protocols I and II, which provide some examples of indispensable objects, including foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installation and supplies, and irrigation works.\textsuperscript{227}

Under the Rome Statute, the ICC characterizes “intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities” as a war crime in non-international armed conflicts.\textsuperscript{228} This rule is also stated in other instruments addressing non-international armed conflicts.\textsuperscript{229} Attacks directed specifically at the civilian population are prohibited, and attacks classified as “indiscriminate attacks” are also prohibited under customary international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{230} The ICRC defines indiscriminate attacks in non-international armed conflict as those:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Which are not directed at a specific military objective;
\end{enumerate}
(b) Which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or

(c) Which employ a method or means of combat, the effects of which cannot be limited as required by international humanitarian law.[231]

 Civilians must be protected against attack,232 unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.233 Where a party to conflict has reason to believe that it is targeting a legitimate military objective, customary international humanitarian law requires that “constant care must be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects” in the conduct of military operations, and all “feasible precautions must be taken to avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects.”234 Further, parties to conflicts “must do everything feasible to verify that targets are military objectives.”235

Proportionality is mandated by customary international humanitarian law, with a prohibition on attacks that “may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.”236 The principle of proportionality applies in both international and non-international armed conflicts. It is also contained in Protocol II and Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons,237 which apply to non-international armed conflicts. Violations of the principle of proportionality are often condemned by governments and the international community, as has been the case in the context of conflicts in Chechnya, Kosovo, and elsewhere in the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia.238 The ICRC in its commentary on the principle of proportionality also notes that Syria has in the past responded favorably to the ICRC’s appeal to respect the principle of proportionality, with regards to the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict.239

Customary international law also prohibits bombing entire cities or towns in relation to specific military objects contained within those towns. Attacks by bombardment are prohibited when they treat clearly separate and distinct military objectives as one single military objective, where those objectives are “located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects.”240

Finally, it should be noted that ordering the displacement of civilian populations for reasons related to the conflict constitutes a war crime in non-international armed conflicts, unless the “security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand.”241 Moreover, parties to a conflict are obliged to prevent displacement caused by their own unlawful acts. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement mandate that “all authorities and international actors shall respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances, so as to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to displacement of persons.”242

viii. Destruction and Theft of Personal Property

Destruction and theft of personal property are prohibited by multiple international law sources. For a full discussion on sources of law for this prohibition, see subsection vi, Home Raids, above. Further,
parties to a conflict have an obligation to distinguish between civilian and military objects, and they are generally prohibited from attacking civilians and civilian areas. For a full discussion of these issues, see subsection vii, Bombardment of Civilians, above.

ix. Children: Deliberate Targeting and Failure to Protect

In addition to all of the international human rights law and international humanitarian law protections afforded to any civilian, prisoner of war, or person hors de combat, discussed elsewhere in this document, customary international humanitarian law mandates that children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special protection and respect. Children are generally considered by international law sources to be persons under the age of 18. However, Additional Protocol I deems children to be individuals below the age of 15.

Additional Protocol II mandates that “children shall be provided with the care and aid they require,” while the CRC mandates that states respect all international humanitarian law rules that are relevant to children, while also taking “all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict.” These norms are reflected in other instruments governing non-international armed conflict, as well as military manuals around the world. Additionally, the UNSC and UN General Assembly have both invoked this protection in specific conflicts, including Sierra Leone and Sudan, as well as in general.

The special protection and respect afforded to children are generally considered to include: protection from all forms of sexual violence; separation from adults while deprived of liberty unless housed with members of their own family; access to education, food, and health care; evacuation from areas of combat for safety purposes; and the reunification of unaccompanied children with their families. Further, customary international humanitarian law prohibits the recruitment of child soldiers and the participation of children in hostilities. Indeed, the statutes of the international criminal tribunals now consider such conduct to constitute a war crime.

C. International Law Standards Applying to Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups

i. Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives

Intentionally locating and launching military operations out of residential areas constitutes multiple violations of customary international humanitarian law.

First, customary international law requires that “each party to the conflict must, to the extent feasible, avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas.” As explained in the ICRC study on customary international law, parties in international and non-international armed conflict are obligated to avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas. In regards to non-international armed conflict, the ICRC states that although:

Additional Protocol II does not explicitly require precautions against the effects of attacks, Article 13(1) stipulates that “the civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations” and it
would be difficult to afford such protection when military objectives are located within or near densely populated areas.\textsuperscript{255}

In practice, the ICRC recognizes that this law only creates a duty to locate military bases and installations outside densely populated areas when feasible.

Second, and relatedly, customary international law dictates that “each party to the conflict must, to the extent feasible, remove civilian persons and objects under its control from the vicinity of military objectives.”\textsuperscript{256} In non-international armed conflict, Additional Protocol II does not explicitly require precautions against the effects of attacks. Nonetheless, Article 13(1) requires that “the civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations,” which requires removal of civilian persons and objects whenever possible.\textsuperscript{257}

The obligation to remove civilian persons and objects from the vicinity of military objectives is entirely distinct from the issues of forced migration and the displacement of civilians. Ordering the displacement of civilian populations for reasons related to the conflict constitutes a war crime in non-international armed conflicts, unless the “security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand.”\textsuperscript{258} Moreover, parties to a conflict are obliged to prevent displacement caused by their own unlawful acts, i.e., the exodus of refugees.

Third, operating in civilian areas can implicate the use of human shields, which is forbidden under customary international law. Customary international law states that the use of human shields involves intentional co-location of military objectives and civilians or persons \textit{hors de combat}, with the specific intent of trying to prevent the targeting of those military objectives.\textsuperscript{259} The ban on human shields is included in Article 28 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (with respect to protected persons), and Additional Protocol II (which mandates that civilians enjoy “general protections against the dangers arising from military operations”).\textsuperscript{260} Additionally, the Rome Statute reiterates the Geneva Conventions, and states that “utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas or military forces immune from military operations” constitutes a war crime.\textsuperscript{261} Further, the ICRC notes that the use of human shields has often been equated with the taking of hostages, which is prohibited by article 4(2) of the Additional Protocol II, and by customary international law.

When occupation, coercion, or threats lead to forced displacement of civilians, the displacement constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. As discussed above, ordering the displacement of civilian populations for reasons related to the conflict, unless the “security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand,” constitutes a war crime in non-international armed conflicts.

The occupation of private homes may constitute the unlawful appropriation of property and may also constitute the crime of pillage, a violation of international humanitarian law. In regard to non-international armed conflict, pillage is prohibited under Additional Protocol II and the Rome Statute.\textsuperscript{262} Customary international law has long protected private property against confiscation, as recognized in the Lieber Code, the Brussels Declaration, the Oxford Manual, and Article 46 of the Hague Regulations.
Private property may only lawfully be seized in situations of “imperative military necessity.” Seizures of private property also require compensation or restoration in peacetime.

Finally, if occupation and/or forced displacement are targeted primarily on religious or political bases, these acts could possibly constitute the crime of persecution. Persecution falls within the Rome Statute’s definition of a crime against humanity if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population.

**ii. Killing of Civilians**

Customary international humanitarian law establishes that civilians in international and non-international armed conflicts are protected against attack, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities. Attacks and violence resulting in death of civilians implicate the blanket prohibition on murder of civilians and persons *hors de combat*. This prohibition on murder is solidified in numerous international humanitarian law conventions and tribunal statutes. Murder is a war crime under the Rome Statute in the context of both international and non-international armed conflicts and under the Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda and of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Violations of the prohibition on murder of civilians and persons *hors de combat* have consistently been condemned by States and international organizations, for example, by the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, and UN Commission on Human Rights. Further, international human rights law establishes a non-derogable prohibition of “arbitrary deprivation of the right to life,” which encompasses unlawful killing in the conduct of hostilities. The ICRC has opined that unlawful killings can result “from a direct attack against a civilian, from an indiscriminate attack, or from an attack against military objectives causing excessive loss of civilian life, all of which are prohibited by the rules on the conduct of hostilities.” Further, directing an attack against a non-defended locality is prohibited by international law.

**iii. Abductions and Related Abuses**

Abductions by Anti-Regime Armed Groups violate or threaten to violate several rules of customary international humanitarian law. These rules include: the prohibition on the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, the prohibition on torture and other cruel or inhuman treatment, the prohibition on murder, the requirement that persons deprived of their liberty be registered, the requirement for respect for family life, and the requirement that each party to a conflict “must take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of armed conflict and to provide their family members with information on their fate.” Further, The UN Human Rights Committee has previously noted that the prohibition of abductions and unacknowledged detention are both non-derogable and “the absolute nature of these prohibitions, even in times of emergency, is justified by their status as norms of general international law.” As a customary law norm, the prohibition on arbitrary detention also applies to non-state actors, including the Anti-Regime Armed Groups in the Syrian conflict.
iv. Other Human Rights Abuses

Anti-Regime Armed Groups have been associated with home raids and the taking of property. The appropriation of civilian property by a non-state armed group constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. The crime of pillage is defined as “the forcible taking of private property by an invading or conquering army from the enemy’s subjects” and is discussed at greater length in Section 4(C)(i), Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives. A recent report on Syria commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council recognizes that government and pro-government forces have established checkpoints and used them for unlawful appropriation, or pillage. It follows, therefore, that anti-government groups committing those same acts are also committing acts of pillage.

The use of checkpoints is not per se unlawful; however, if checkpoints are used for unlawful activity, including the unlawful appropriation of property for private or personal use, then the perpetrator has committed a war crime.

D. Other Key Areas of Concern; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Under international law, sexual violence constitutes a broad category of acts, including “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.” Sexual violence includes, inter alia, rape, sexual slavery, sexual harassment, and trafficking. Sexual violence is also prohibited under international human rights law, primarily through the prohibition on torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Gender-based violence, in comparison, is an umbrella term that includes any harmful act perpetrated against a person’s will, which is motivated by or based on socially ascribed gender differences. For example, under international law, forced marriages and honor killings are forms of GBV even though they may be legal under domestic law. Gender-based violence is prohibited in international human rights law primarily through the prohibition on torture and discrimination. International human rights laws demand that all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, are equally protected by prohibitions against sexual and gender-based violence.

International humanitarian law prohibits rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflicts. Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions prohibits “violence to life and person,” including cruel treatment and torture and “outrages upon personal dignity.” Article 14 of the Third Geneva Convention provides that prisoners of war are entitled to “respect for their persons and their honour.” The Rome Statute explicitly criminalizes sexual violence and some forms of gender-based violence. The Rome Statute criminalizes “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity” as crimes against humanity, when such acts are perpetrated “as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.” Additionally, the Rome Statute defines persecution on gender-based grounds as a crime against humanity.
Further, the Rome Statute criminalizes acts of sexual violence as war crimes in both international and non-international armed conflicts, including “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, [...] enforced sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence also constituting a serious violation of [Common Article III].”  

Finally, rape has also been defined and prosecuted as an act of genocide in the ICTR, thereby creating precedent for future prosecutions in the ICC on similar grounds, i.e., when rape has been perpetrated with the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.”
Annex C. Descriptions of Armed Groups

This annex provides a brief description of the state institutions and armed groups participating in the Syrian conflict. It is not a complete list; instead this annex recognizes the most commonly identified parties. The summary is divided into three categories. Category A includes Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups. Category B includes all groups that have identified themselves as acting in opposition to the Syrian regime. It is important to note, however, that these groups are not necessarily aligned together and some groups within this category are increasingly engaging in combat with each other. Category C includes groups that cannot be categorized as either pro- or anti-regime. Some of the groups in Category C have consistently refrained from identifying themselves with either a pro-regime or anti-regime agenda, while others have demonstrated mixed agendas or affiliations, and others are difficult to categorize.

Category A: Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups

i. Syrian Armed Forces

The Syrian Armed Forces are the official military forces in Syria, functioning under the constitutional command of the President of the Republic. They include the SAA (outfitted in olive, khaki, or camouflaged uniforms), Syrian Arab Navy (outfitted in white or blue uniforms), Syrian Arab Air Forces (outfitted in Olive, Khaki, or camouflaged uniforms), and Syrian Arab Air Defense Force (outfitted in khaki-grey or blue-grey camouflaged uniforms). The elite units of the Syrian Armed Forces, such as the Presidential (Republican) Guard, 15th Special Forces Division, and the 4th Armored Division, are exclusively occupied by Alawite personnel.

SAA soldiers use small arms (e.g., Kalashnikovs and sniper rifles), battle tanks, and armored personnel vehicles. SAA checkpoints are commonly identified by Syrian flags, official uniformed personnel with tanks, and pictures of the president.

ii. Syrian Security Services and Intelligence Agencies

The Syrian Security Services (sometimes referred to as Syrian Security in this report) include State Security, Political Security, Military Security, and Air Force Security. Even prior to the current conflict, the Security Services operated independently of each other, generally outside the legal system. Security Services wear camouflaged army uniforms with a red ribbon on the shoulder, which is a signal of rank within the official military police.

The intelligence agencies, mainly consisting of the Department of Military Intelligence, the Political Security Directorate, the General Intelligence Directorate, and the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, are highly autonomous, though accountable to the President. The Intelligence Directorates maintain numerous detention facilities. Before the conflict, intelligence services, referred to as Mukhabarat, maintained broad surveillance functions, including monitoring political and dissident activity in Syria and abroad, scrutinizing media outlets, and observing Palestinian activity.
iii. Shabiha

The Shabiha is the literal term for apparitions (or ghosts). Before the conflict started, the Shabiha referred to groups that were mainly affiliated with the Alawite sect and engaged in the illegal transportation of weapons and drugs along the Syrian coast.  

Since the outset of hostilities in Syria, the term Shabiha has been used to describe supporters of the Syrian regime who are armed with small arms and light weapons. It has frequently been reported that they attack demonstrators alongside the armed forces, and they typically wear black or civilian clothing. The Shabiha have expanded their ranks to include supporters of the regime from other sects, such as Christians and Shiites. The group may also be made up of members of security departments and intelligence agencies who operate undercover, thus appearing in civilian clothing. Unemployed and poor youth as well as ex-military or early released criminals are also reported to have been armed by the regime.  

The number of Shabiha may exceed 10,000. In addition to attacks on demonstrators, they have been implicated in home raids, executions, disappearances, and sectarian attacks. Shabiha do not operate under one command or squad.

iv. Pro-Regime Popular Committees

Pro-Regime Popular Committees, known in Arabic as Lijan Sha’biyya, are comprised of persons outside the Syrian Armed Forces who have been armed by the regime. They appear to have been formed as resident groups to protect neighborhoods or other areas from opposition fighters. The Popular Committees are known to be self-organized, either to actively support the regime, protect their area from infiltration of armed fighters, or maintain neutrality towards the conflict, as is reportedly the case with most Popular Committees in Jaramana, a Druze-dominated area of Damascus. The names of popular committees vary depending on their location, and they have more recently been absorbed into the NDF (see below).

v. Hezbollah

The Lebanese Shiite party, Hezbollah, has long been supported by the Syrian regime in its fight against Israel; Syria is considered the second major sponsor of the party after Iran. Hezbollah has reportedly had some involvement in the Syrian conflict, which pushed the US to sanction the party in August 2012. In an October 2012 speech, the Secretary General of the Party denied the Party’s involvement in the Syria conflict, claiming that those who went to Syria to fight were driven by their individual initiative to fulfill religious duties. However, in May 2013, Hezbollah’s General Secretary officially announced they were sending troops to assist the regime in its fight against rebels in Al-Qusayr. Reports indicate that Hezbollah fighters took responsibility for ground operations, while aerial attacks were conducted by the Syrian Arab Air Forces. Recent reports also indicate that Hezbollah is supporting the establishment of an army in parallel to the SAA, known as the NDF. Hezbollah fighters traditionally wear camouflaged uniforms, but have been observed in black uniforms with red berets.
vi. National Defense Forces

Pro-Assad paramilitary forces created to assist the SAA began cropping up in the last half of 2012. The National Defense Forces, or NDF, also referred to as Quwat Al-Difa’a Al-Watani, gathered together disparate militia groups into an umbrella organization with a structured hierarchy. Observers believe that the NDF receives funding and training from Iran, but the primary distinction between the NDF and SAA is the decentralization of authority and the fact that most NDF fighters remain within their local geographic area. Fighters in the NDF reportedly dress in camouflage, civilian clothing, or a combination of both.

vii. Iranian Security Forces

Iran has reportedly provided material and technical support to the Syrian Government Forces since early 2011. Reports suggest that Iranian Law Enforcement Forces have provided Syrian Intelligence with equipment and expertise to contain protests. There have been media reports of members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps training Syrian personnel. An estimated 150 guards were sent to secretly train regime troops. Defectors have reported the direct involvement of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Ground Forces in battles, e.g., with Iranian Revolutionary Guard Ground Forces providing snipers in protest areas. In 2012, Iranian support extended to training pro-regime paramilitary groups (see above regarding NDF). Additionally, Iranian Revolutionary Guard corps Quds Forces are reported by SAA defectors to have been involved on the level of high-ranking army personnel.

viii. Non-Kurdish Armed Groups from Iraq

Beginning in 2013, several groups from Iraq have been increasingly involved in and affected by the Syrian conflict. In April 2013, Iraqi groups such as Kata’ib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Battalions) and Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq (League of the Righteous) were reportedly involved in the conflict with the stated aim of defending Shiite religious shrines in Damascus. Originally, these factions were founded in Iraq by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Quds Force and Hezbollah.

Additionally, the Abu Al-Fadhl Al-Abbas Brigade is a coalition of Shiite forces from Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq; Iraqi Kata’ib Hezbollah and Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq operate under its umbrella. This Brigade has been involved in battles against opposition fighters since 2012; it mainly operates south of Damascus.

ix. The PFLP-General Command and Palestinian Popular Committees

The PFLP-General Command has taken an active pro-regime stance during the conflict, leading some of its members to defect to rebel groups. The General Command also has its own protection committees under the name of Palestinian Popular Committees, which have been involved in fighting against both the anti-regime Palestinian factions, such as fighters affiliated with Hamas and the Local Coordination Committee in the Yarmouk Camp, and opposition fighters in Al-Hajar Al-Aswad and Al-Midan. The General Command has also provided support to Syrian Intelligence.

Media reports point to the PFLP-General Command’s involvement in sniper killings of rebel fighters inside Yarmouk Camp. The PFLP-General Command also fought against Jabhat Al-Nusra and other
fighters from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as against anti-regime Syrians and Palestinians. 322

x. Palestinian Liberation Army

The Palestinian Liberation Army is the military division of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was created in 1964 by a decision of the League of Arab States, and its battalions fall under the control of their host country’s army. Thus, in Syria, the Palestinian Liberation Army effectively serves as a battalion of the SAA. 323

Category B: Anti-Regime Armed Groups

Recent estimates suggest that there are now around 1,000 anti-regime groups actively participating in Syria’s armed insurgency. 324 While these groups represent a range of affiliations and political ideologies (e.g., secular, Islamist, Salafist, or jihadist), respondents in this study typically identified armed groups as either “FSA,” or “Jabhat Al-Nusra,” or refrained from identifying a particular group. This annex contains descriptions of the principal and most organized Anti-Regime Armed Groups and alliances, not as a representation of groups identified by respondents, but rather to inform the reader regarding the profile of groups that might have been responsible for incidents reported by respondents in this study.

i. Free Syrian Army

The Free Syrian Army, or FSA, was formed in the end of July 2011. It is primarily composed of defectors from Syria’s regular armed forces. Its organizational structure is loose, with relative operational autonomy among its different factions. The FSA seeks to be the military wing of Syria’s political opposition, and its only stated common goal is Assad’s departure. It is comprised of non-Islamist moderate groups supported by the Supreme Military Council, which was created in 2012 to form a command structure for the groups operating as the FSA. 325

FSA fighters are reported to be dressed in army uniforms, civilian clothing, or a combination of both, wearing a headband and displaying the revolution flag at their checkpoints and locations. Many FSA fighters wear black headbands inscribed with the Shahada (the Islamic creed). 327

Some Anti-Regime Armed Groups, such as the Al-Harmoush Battalion in Jabal Al-Zawiya, the Al-Omari Battalion in South Hawran, and the Khalid Bin Walid Brigade in Homs, fall under the FSA umbrella and are among the most successful of the factions affiliated with the FSA. 328

The FSA obtains its weapons via seizures of Syrian Government Forces’ locations, defections, and smuggling through the borders of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan from groups aligned with the opposition. Foreign fighters have reportedly taken part in the conflict on the side of the FSA. However, as the conflict intensified, foreign fighters have been primarily associated with jihadist groups.

There have been increasing conflicts in recent months between FSA and jihadist groups. The FSA is broadly perceived as the only moderate fighting opposition that represents the initial protesters’ demands. However, over the past few months, there have been more than 3,000 defections from the
FSA to Jabhat Al-Nusra due to the latter’s increasing military power (and the corresponding lack of weapons and ammunition among FSA factions) and the failure of the FSA to unify its leadership. Areas in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib, Deir Al-Zour, and Damascus have experienced the largest defections to Jabhat Al-Nusra.  

ii. Jabhat Al-Nusra

The Victory Front for the People of the Levant is also known as the Jabhat Al-Nusra Front or just Jabhat Al-Nusra. It is Syria’s most significant jihadist group, started in late 2011 with the support of Al-Qa’eda Iraq. Its stated objective is to defeat the regime and establish an Islamic state. Jabhat Al-Nusra has exhorted Syrian Sunnis to fight members of the Alawite community, of which the Assad family are members.

Estimates as to the number of Jabhat Al-Nusra members vary between 6,000 and 10,000. Fighters are reported to have joined Jabhat Al-Nusra from other countries in the Levant, North Africa, and Europe. The UNSC, Australia, US, and various European countries list Jabhat Al-Nusra as a terrorist group, alleging it has a direct link with Al-Qa’eda Iraq. Accounts often depict Jabhat Al-Nusra fighters as having long beards, and they wear black uniforms with black headbands stating in white script “God is Greatest.” Jabhat Al-Nusra checkpoints and other military sites are known to have black flags with “God is Greatest” written in white script.

Supporters of the opposition, particularly FSA, are increasingly condemning operations conducted by Jabhat Al-Nusra, accusing the jihadists of diverting the opposition’s objective.

iii. Syrian Islamic Liberation Front

The Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, known as Jabhat Tahrir Souriya Al-Islamiya, or the Syrian Liberation Front, or SLF, was formed in December 2012, when a large faction ended its affiliation with FSA and announced the establishment of a separate coalition made of over 20 Islamist Anti-Regime Armed Groups, some of which claim simultaneous operations under both the FSA and SLF. The coalition, led by the head of Suqour Al-Sham, tried to maintain relations with the FSA, but the relationship deteriorated when FSA accused the SLF of dominating acquisition of transmitted weapons from supporting countries. Still, affiliations are not clear as some SLF fighters also continue to identify as FSA. SLF groups include, inter alia:

- Suqour Al-Sham (Idlib), a moderate Islamic faction whose goal for Syria is political Islam with the maintenance of democracy. Although it operates within a religious framework, this faction identifies as part of the FSA.

- Ansar Al-Islam Gathering (Damascus), which consists of Islamist factions, such as the Islam, Al-Furqan, and Al-Habib Mustafa Divisions, which are more conformist, attract jihadists, and have established stronger ties with Jabhat Al-Nusra. However, some Ansar Al-Islam Gathering fighters still identify as FSA. This group claimed responsibility for suicide bombings in September 2012 in the area of Damascus.
The Farouq Brigades (Homs) joined the FSA after defecting from the SAA in 2011. As the Syrian conflict intensified, these brigades turned into a religious group and attracted growing numbers of fighters and funding. Hence, they were able to form a dominant unit among opposition groups. The Farouq Brigades then joined the SLF in September 2012; however, it is unclear whether the Farouq Brigades have an ongoing affiliation with FSA as well.\textsuperscript{338} The affiliates of the Farouq Brigades operating outside Homs are: Farouq Al-Shamal (in the north, at two border points); the Revolutionary Council and Jaysh Al-Tawhid (in Deir Al-Zour); Amr Ibn El A’as Division (in Aleppo); Al-Naser Salaheddine Brigade (in Latakia).\textsuperscript{339} The Farouq Brigades are estimated at 20,000 fighters. Descriptions of the fighters vary; some wear black headbands with “God is Greatest” written on them, some display the revolution flag, and they wear a mix of civilian and camouflage clothing.

iv. Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham Al-Islamiyya

In early 2013, around 80 factions, including the Ahrar Al-Sham Brigades (Idlib), Harakat Al-Fajr Al-Islamiyya (Aleppo), Jamaat Al-Tali’a Al-Islamiyya (Idlib), and Kataeb Al-Iman Al-Muqatila (Damascus) joined together to form the Islamic Movement of the Free Ones of the Levant, or Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham Al-Islamiyya.\textsuperscript{340} The group can be distinguished only by its flag, as fighters are otherwise dressed like other anti-regime militias, in a combination of civilian and camouflage clothing.

Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham Al-Islamiyya is dominated by the Ahrar Al-Sham Brigades, a union of jihadist factions that was established at the beginning of 2012.\textsuperscript{341} Although it has fewer fighters and munitions than Jabhat Al-Nusra, Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham Al-Islamiyya was able to carry out suicide bombing missions against government sites.\textsuperscript{342} While mainly located in Idlib Governorate, the Ahrar Al-Sham Brigades also stretches into Hama and Aleppo through its over 80 faction member groups.\textsuperscript{343} Its most prominent member groups are the Qawafel Al-Shuhada, Al-Tawhid wa Al-Imam, and Ansar Al-Haqq Brigades (Idlib), the Al-Shahba and Al-Hassan Bin Thabet Brigades (Aleppo), and the Salaheddine and Abul Fida Brigades (Hama).\textsuperscript{344} Checkpoints are identified by Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham Al-Islamiyya’s white flag containing the script of the name of the group. Like other jihadist groups, Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham Al-Islamiyya fighters have long beards, and wear black outfits and black turbans.\textsuperscript{345}

v. Anti-Regime Palestinian Factions

Hamas, also known as the Islamic Resistance Movement, is another Palestinian party that refused to back the Syrian regime; it publicly announced its support to the opposition in September 2012. After this announcement, a number of Hamas officials were assassinated and the party became more deeply involved in supporting the opposition by extending training services to FSA units.\textsuperscript{346} Additionally, Palestinian refugees from Ain Al-Helweh Camp and other camps in Lebanon may also be participating in support of the opposition in Syria.\textsuperscript{347}
Category C: Other Groups

i. Kurdish Supreme Committee and Kurdish Popular Protection Units

The Kurdish Supreme Committee [hereinafter KSC] consists of two Syrian Kurdish parties: the PYD and the KNC, a coalition of Syrian Kurdish groups. The KSC has begun to administer and control majority-Kurdish towns and key border crossings in northern Syria in the absence of the SAA, which withdrew from the area in mid-2012.

The existence of the Kurdish Popular Protection Units, known as the YPG, was officially announced in 2011. The YPG is the armed division of the PYD. PYD appears to be the steering power of the armed faction among Kurdish parties in KSC, and YPG is considered a protective front for the Kurdish communities in the north. The formation of YPG goes back to the aftermath of the 2004 uprising in Qamishli by Syrian Kurds.

ii. Syrian Kurdish Forces

The Syrian Kurdish Forces are joint forces among various Kurdish parties that decided to collaborate, with the express aim of maintaining neutrality towards the Syrian conflict. The alliance occurred between the People's Council of Western Kurdistan and the KNC. Soon after formation, their united military forces engaged in the conflict to oust rebel groups. The Syrian Kurdish Forces, mainly operated by PYD and its armed division YPG, have mostly been involved in the fighting against jihadist factions, such as the Al-Tawhid Brigade, Ghuraba Al-Sham and Jabhat Al-Nusra in Ras Al-Ain in Al-Hasakah and Ain Al-Arab of Aleppo. All of these areas are dominantly populated by Kurds, with a shifting presence of Arabs, Armenians, Syriacs, and Chechens.

It appears that the Kurdish population is generally not uniformly aligned with either the Syrian Government forces or the Anti-Regime Armed Groups; it has also been reported that some Kurdish units in Aleppo are fighting alongside Anti-Regime Armed Groups, yet distinguishing themselves from jihadist groups.
Annex D. Illustrative Responses: Reasons for Leaving Syria

All survey respondents were asked to explain why they left Syria. Set forth below are illustrative responses, grouped according to the governorates that respondents left (Aleppo, Damascus/Rif Damascus, Dar’a, Hama, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib, and Raqqa). Allegations as to perpetrator identification are reported as stated by the respondent in response to this question, but cannot be corroborated. It should be noted that the contents of this section are meant to illustrate the state of mind of the respondents who left Syria; thus, it can be presumed that the accounts shared with the assessment team may not reflect all the exact details of events precisely. The responses below are listed chronologically (from the earliest to the most recent departure), under each governorate.

A. Aleppo

- (Female, 38, fled Aug. 2012) Hell broke loose. The FSA entered Aleppo and as a result, Aleppo started to be bombarded. My husband is a medical examiner. He was threatened and was afraid of being kidnapped. His clinic shut down, and there was no more work. We left because we were scared my husband would get killed or kidnapped after he was threatened. Doctors were specifically targeted. We went to Damascus and then flew to [host country].

- (Male, 45, fled Nov. 2012) We were living in harmony; no problems. The State was good to us; we had no problem with the State. When the FSA entered the city, problems started. The FSA took a school close to us and occupied it. There was a police station close to us, and clashes started. The FSA started killing the police to try to take the station. There was lots of shooting. We were very scared because my house was close to the station. I had my own car. FSA took it and mounted a Dushka .50 caliber [DShK .50 caliber anti-aircraft machine gun] on the back ... I left because of the FSA. Fighting lasted about three months and we left. They stole my car. They tried to make me buy it back for 300,000 Syrian Pounds [approximately 3,000 US Dollars at the time the respondent fled]. I offered 50,000 [approximately 500 US Dollars at the time the respondent fled], but they refused. I left because of the FSA.

- (Female, 19, fled Nov. 2012) We left because we were afraid of the bombing. I was pregnant and delivered my baby in Aleppo two days after my father was assassinated. My father had been in the State Police and resigned when the war started. He and my uncle were tortured and then killed, in Sept. 2012. We found their bodies on the street, but [we] don’t know which side killed them. There were battles, bombs, and rockets in our area. So I left with my mother and small children to [host country].

- (Female, 20, fled Jan. 2013) There was no more infrastructure, electricity, or water. Aerial bombings from the SAA started during Ramadan 2012. Shrapnel from the FSA [started hitting the area] three to four months ago. Armed ground assaults began about two months ago between SAA and FSA members during the nights. There are home
invasions from both sides: SAA members looking for armed persons and terrorists, FSA members looking for food and shelter.

B. Damascus

- (Female, 30, fled Dec. 2011) We were afraid of terrorism. We ran away from kidnapping. Our neighbor's daughter was 17, and she was kidnapped for ransom. She was returned after a couple of days, looking lost and thin. We also saw people who we did not know dead on the street.

- (Female, 34, fled July 2012) I lived in Al-Tadamun [in Damascus] for 12 years. The FSA came and lived in the same neighborhood. The demonstrations started between the FSA and Security [Services], and as a result many innocent children were killed. There was a lot of fear. The Security [Services] sent threats so that nobody would go to the demonstrations. We were the victims of the FSA and the Security [Services]. We received threats that the neighborhood would be shelled, so we fled to our relatives with only the clothes we were wearing. When we were with our relatives, we heard the sound of shelling on Al-Tadamun.

- (Female, 31, fled Aug. 2012) 18 days after Ramadan in 2012, I was in my house with 14 members of my family when the house was surrounded by three tanks. The attack lasted for three hours. All of my family managed to survive, but after what happened, we were very afraid and did not want to be in [neighborhood] anymore.

- (Female, 35, fled Oct. 2012) I was afraid something could happen to my husband when he was going to work. I was nervous because I never knew if he would come home. When we left Syria five months ago I hadn’t seen anything. My family and I came here looking for stability. But, I went back to Syria two months ago to collect something for my daughter, and my house and the area where I had lived were completely destroyed.

- (Female, 49, fled Dec. 2012) We left because we were afraid of the violence. Until December 16, 2012, the situation was relatively stable in [Yarmouk] [C]amp. The local Palestinian groups were controlling the camp and keeping a “neutral” position with both sides. But aerial bombing started on December 16th targeting Al-Bassel Hospital and Abdel Kader Mosque, mainly because the FSA were “officially” established in the camp as the local groups were unable to stop them. I left with my family that day because I was afraid of an escalation of violence, especially as I was alone with my two daughters after my husband disappeared in June of 2012.

- (Male, 27, fled Dec. 2012) The camp was shelled more than once. Two of my nephews were killed in August 2012. I left in September 2012 for [host country] because of the shelling, but went back in October. I left permanently two months later in December 2012 and returned to [host country]. A lot of armed men came to the camp the week before I left. My parents were afraid and went to the basement. When I arrived in the
evening, everyone was leaving. I saw around 100 armed men; there may have been more. Clashes happened while I was on the road. I couldn’t reach home without a huge risk. It was a horrible night. We left camp in the early morning. There were armed persons from opposition groups, Jabhat Al-Nusra, and the FSA. I don’t know why this happened. All the armed men were from outside of the camp; there were masked people. There were Syrians wearing ordinary clothes with a sniper rifle and other weapons. Now there is a Dushka [a DShK, a Russian-designed heavy machine gun] and various weapons.

• (Male, 65, fled Mar. 2013) My son was kidnapped in August 2012. One night he was working on a taxi that he owned. The next day his body was found with six bullet wounds. The car was stolen. I am not sure who did it; there was no evidence. There was a rocket attack, and my house was damaged. Both sides bombed the street. There was no work after I lost the car. My son did not have any relations with any political side. I don’t know who killed him or why.

• (Male, 56, fled Mar. 2013) We left because work stopped in the camp and basic resources became scarce. There was no food and security deteriorated. I didn’t want to stay amid fighters who were everywhere in the camp. I worried about my daughters, so I decided to leave.

• (Female, 33, fled Dec. 2012) We stayed home all the time during the war. Whenever shelling started, we used to hide in the basement. After the fighting got fierce and members of the Free Syrian Army entered the camp, we became afraid and decided to leave. The fighters were wearing bands on their heads stamped with the name “Jabhat Al-Nusra.” Some of the security committees who were protecting the camp joined these fighters. This made me feel insecure for my young sons and daughters. We left the camp in December.

C. Rif Damashq

• (Female, 39, fled Oct. 2012) I left because of the current situation and destruction, and fear of sexual violence; because the regime army was burning houses; because of the high prices and lack of food supplies; because of the constant power and water cuts; because of fear for my children; because of the shelling; because of the constant clashes at the military checkpoint close to us; and because of the lack of stability. The direct reason for me leaving Syria is my fear of the regime’s Shabiha, who I have heard perpetrate sexual violence.

• (Male, 32, fled Feb. 2013) We were neutral; we thought what happened does not fit with our values and morals. I am a surgical assistant. The hospital that I worked at was occupied by the “opposition.” Doctors and nurses were threatened, and equipment was stolen. Then we couldn’t go to work, so we stayed for six months at home without jobs. The situation was sectarian. I was afraid of treating unknown people because I didn’t
know the nature of their political views. The sectarianism spread. On our way from Syria, we saw bodies on the roads. Some of them were wearing military uniforms; others were wearing civilian clothing.

- (Female 23, fled Apr. 2013) My parents were killed and my sister was shot when they were driving in [hometown] in October 2011 ... [and] my husband was arrested and beaten in front of me and then detained for 45 days. I was pregnant at the time and gave birth two days after his arrest ... He was arrested because he participated in demonstrations [and]; provided medical assistance to the injured ... His parents hired a lawyer and got him out ... My husband is now with the FSA. I came here with my child because we are scared to stay there for many reasons.

D. Dar’a

- (Male, 22, fled Jan. 2012) I was a university student in Syria. Due to the destruction and the siege on Dar’a we decided to organize a peaceful movement at the university to break the siege on Dar’a. About 200 people went out inside the university. The army surrounded the university and hit us, and there were arbitrary arrests. ... They decided to detain us without a trial ... I saw several people killed by arbitrary shooting from the military. I saw the Suweida massacre where there were about 500 martyrs. I escaped the massacre by crawling away.

- (Female, 53, fled Feb. 2012) [I left] because of the Regime. People were being arrested and killed in their houses. My father was arrested. Security forces visited my house several times. It was different people each time. Security and the army were always together.

- (Male, 43, fled May 2012) I used to provide first aid to the wounded and was a correspondent who reported on the revolution. In 2011, Syrian Security came to my house many times, but it was my principle to not run away. In mid-2011, my town was bombed by airplanes, possibly targeting a rebel camp nearby. During the Ramadan month in 2011, I was beaten by the Security Force because of my work. About 50 military/army officers came to my neighborhood and took me and some of my neighbors to a bus nearby. We were beaten on the way to the bus and questioned about our connections. I finally left with my family because my house was targeted by a bomb. When I was in [redacted], I heard soldiers speaking Farsi. The Iranians were under the management of the Syrian Army, like they were another army within the Syrian Army.

- (Male, 18, fled June 2012) My father was an officer in the Republican Guard, but he left the army so my family was wanted by the Government. We were scared we would be killed. We were in Damascus, but fled to Dar’a. I fled with my cousins and uncles when the government breached the town we were in. I witnessed attacks from the land forces. There were 120MM mortar attacks. I fled in June 2012, but I think I actually managed to [cross over into host country] in July 2012.
(Female, 35, fled July 2012) [I left] because of the missiles, aircrafts, and shelling. You do not know where it is coming from. There were aircraft hovering over us. We could not get to shelter somewhere, so we decided to leave. There were missile launchers on the edges of Dar’a dropping missiles. There were snipers in different places. We could tell the planes were MIGs from their sound. Rebels were hiding at a school in the area, so the military was shelling there, but houses were destroyed. In May 2011, they started bombing from the air.

(Female, 26, fled July 2012) My home was raided in search of terrorists and weapons by the Syrian Army, Security, and Shabiha in civilian clothes. My home was raided about seven times or more. In June 2012, my home was raided, and my 16-year-old brother was kicked by the soldiers and beaten with weapons. My mother tried to save him, so the soldiers started to insult her and her morality. One of the officers and a Shabiha told me, “If you want your brother safe, take your clothes off and let me sleep with you in front of your brother.” My brother couldn’t move because of the beating. Our home was hit by two mortar shells while we were home, and we were hit by the shrapnel.

(Male, 43, fled July 2012) A month before I came to [host country], while I was helping the injured, a mortar shell landed and a piece of shrapnel hit my head. Our house was raided six times. The soldiers who would enter would be Iranians, with beards, with a Syrian officer. Those with beards would not speak inside the house. The officer would insult us, and they would search and vandalize the house. They took my motorcycle and burned it with a group of other motorcycles. I used to provide medicine and water to the injured.

(Female, 46, fled Aug. 2012) We left because of the shelling. We were bombarded from the land and the air. [We left] because of fear of the random arrests; because of the house raids, as they raided my house more than once. They searched my house while looking at my daughters. [We left] because I was afraid of sexual aggression towards our daughters.

(Female, 36, fled Aug. 2012) [I left because of] fear. My husband, who was in the Syrian Army, was kidnapped by the FSA and was gone for five months. He eventually defected from the SAA and was smuggled by the FSA to a [location] outside of Syria. I left because I was receiving calls from the Syrian Army looking for my husband and threatening to “get the women in my family” if my husband did not resurface. The SAA raided my house once, looking for my husband and other defectors. The FSA smuggled me across the border and brought me to [this location] at the end of August.

(Male, 42, fled Aug. 2012) I left Syria for the sake of my wife and sisters-in-law. My father was injured by shrapnel. I was detained by Security for seven months in November 2011, for two months initially, then five months. I was hit by a bullet in my hand. Then I was taken to the [Military Detention Center] in [location redacted]. I was
tortured there. They kept me standing on my feet for eight days, in addition to beatings and insults. My son was also arrested, and he still suffers from the results of the beatings and torture. There was mortar shelling, then rockets fired from 18 kilometers away, and they torched houses in my neighborhood.

- (Female, 37, fled Sept. 2012) We left because of the constant shelling from various sources: missiles, planes, and bullets. We stayed in the basement for five months ... Eight security officers raided our home and hit my husband. They demolished the outer wall of the house. They hit my husband using sticks. They were eight of [them], Bashar’s security officers. They broke [my husband’s] hand, and they hit his back in front of the children. They hit my son when he wanted to help his father. They told [my son], “Stay away or we will shoot you.” They also used foul language. They cut off the electricity and harassed me. When I was defending my husband, they pulled me back and scared me with their leering looks. [I was afraid] of rape. One of the soldiers said to my children, “Go out and leave your mother.” The soldiers stayed by my home until my neighbor came out and said, “What do you want from this woman? Go away.”

- (Female 42, fled Sept. 2012) There was bombing from tanks and artillery all of the time. My daughter was injured from an aerial attack. I had relatives from other cities in Syria who fled before us. I have children I and was afraid that something might happen to them. [The respondent later explained that her home was destroyed in the same aerial attack that injured her two and a half-year-old daughter.]

- (Female, 24, fled Jan. 2013) A day before I left Syria, a mortar shell landed on my house. I left because of the terror of airplane bombardment night and day. The army raided my house twice; the last time was six months ago. They were looking for my husband because he is with the FSA. The first time it was five Alawite soldiers wearing olive military uniforms and helmets [and] carrying Russian guns. They believed there was an injured person in our house. The second time they were looking for my husband. There were six soldiers and a tank was parked in front of our house. They destroyed the furniture and ransacked the house, looking for bullets. The platoon commander addressed my absent husband with foul language and swearing. He threatened that if my husband did not turn himself in, our house would be burned down.

- (Female, 21, fled Jan. 2013) I saw many killings and scattered dead bodies. We left because of the land-based shelling that was coming from a hill about a 15-minute walk from us and because of the random and arbitrary arrests. [We left] because of the many raids. They raided my house in July 2012 and vandalized the house, broke the windows and the doors. [We left] because the snipers everywhere limited our movements so much that we couldn’t buy our supplies.

- (Female, 39, fled Jan. 2013) There was no security. I did not want to keep my children there. There is daily shelling in the village, there are checkpoints everywhere, and there
are battles and snipers. Most of the people from the village are leaving it; it is semi-
deserted. I feared for my children. There were raids of my home by the Syrian Security
and Syrian Army without permission. There was missile shelling daily on the village,
tanks, and snipers. During the last three months, there was aerial bombing.

- (Male, fled Mar. 2013) I left Syria because of the bombing. My house was destroyed by a
  rocket attack. At the beginning of the war, in May 2011, I was abducted, beaten, and
  tortured. The Syrian Army wanted some men and some names, so they abducted me at
  random.

E. Hama

- (Male, 42, fled Jan. 2012) The security situation was bad; there is no more state. My
  house was robbed — it was new. My car was taken. There was disorder, criminality, and
  many robberies. We left before anything worse would happen. I’m a journalist and
  either we had to take up weapons and join them or we had to leave. There is no middle
  ground. We could not come and go as we pleased. There were five or six people from
  the village, criminals, making trouble. My brother came to [host country], and the rest
  of us followed. All of my siblings are here now.

- (Female, 33, fled Nov. 2012) There were Shabiha and Security. The SAA came and
  settled in the village so we couldn’t go out anymore. The SAA came because they said
  there were armed persons against the regime in the village. They stopped people [from
  going] back and forth. At 12:00 a.m., there was a tank attack by the SAA. In the
  morning, we left. I don’t know why they attacked. There were no attacks from our side.
  We were afraid for our children.

F. Hasakah

- (Male, 24, fled Nov. 2012) I have three cousins who have been in the army for two
  years. My cousin, who was an army officer, was kidnapped three months ago. There is
  no work or electricity. Christians are being stared at in the street. One morning, I was
  attacked by three masked people on two motorbikes. They stopped me because I was
  looking at them. I said, “good morning,” and they attacked me with a knife. There was
  kidnapping, especially of Christians. The displaced people from Deir Al-Zour fueled the
  sectarian division in the neighborhood. There were clashes in the street between the
  regime army and armed groups. At protests and on walls, I heard and read the phrase
  “Alawites to the grave and Christians to Beirut.” At armed opposition checkpoints, they
  said things like “we will ‘Muslim cover’ your women.”

- (Male, 33, fled Jan. 2013) In November 2013, we were sleeping, and armed groups went
  into the neighborhood and started shooting. In the morning, we went to Hasakah, and I
  left my family there. I went back to my neighborhood a few days later and found my
  home as well as the school and church destroyed. People came through from Turkey,
from Jalan Dinar [the Turkish border city of Ceylanpinar]. Kurds and armed groups clashed, and the Kurds took control. Members of one of the armed groups all had long beards with no moustaches. They had black flags with script (“No God but Allah”), and they wore black headbands with that same script. I was told that one of them is from Afghanistan and they presented themselves as FSA. The regime shelled the town after these groups came in. When I came back to my town, I was stopped and asked my religion by these groups at a checkpoint. I said I was Christian and that I came to check on my house, and I was allowed to pass.

G. Homs

- (Female, 43, no date of departure given) I left Syria because I was afraid of my children being kidnapped. There was bombing in the area where I lived and sniper fire. I passed through the border with my children. My daughters and children came to [host country] before me. I was the last one to come with my ten-year-old daughter. I left two older daughters in Syria.

- (Female, 38, no date of departure given) My neighborhood and home were bombed by tanks and shot at by machine guns on tanks. Planes would fly around the area, though they were not dropping bombs. There were tanks at the checkpoints going in to the city and in the streets when there were demonstrations. Sometimes they exchanged fire with the terrorists (FSA). There were snipers on the rooftops, always ready to shoot. My son was shot at while walking down the street in the neighborhood, but he wasn’t harmed. I was afraid of bombings and raids. My house was raided once because there was a tip that there were weapons in the area. Tanks surrounded our area when they heard there were terrorists [Free Syrian Army]. There were a large number of soldiers and Syrians in green military uniforms. There was ongoing bombing, tanks, machine guns, and sniper fire. We left at sunset one night, when the FSA ran out of ammunition.

- (Male, 32, fled Mar. 2011) I was afraid because armed groups were harassing us during our daily life. Forty-five members of my family were killed. At first it seemed to be just peaceful demonstrations, but after weeks it evolved into stealing, looting, and kidnapping. They asked us [Christians] to go out and demonstrate. When they [Christians] refused, armed groups started kidnapping Christians. Armed men kidnapped 25 Christians, and kidnapped ten of the Muslims who attempt to rescue the Christians. These groups threatened to kill any Christian doctor who refused to help them. At first the Christians relocated to the eastern part of town, where there were Army and Security forces. Afterwards, everyone [Christians, Alawites, and Shias] left.

- (Female, 21, fled May 2011) First the opposition was protesting, then one day they came to our street and started shooting and threatening us by saying that we are infidels and that they want to kill us all. We escaped from the walls and walked to the end of the road on off-road paths. From there, a car took us to the next village. We
went to [the village] after Easter. Then the SAA came in and took control, so we went back to our village, took a few things and came to [host country]. We did not know that we would not be able to go back. We were so terrified, and my father decided we should leave immediately.

- (Male, 27, fled Aug. 2011) We could not sleep because of the shooting. I went to prison 15 days before Ramadan and was released on the third day of Ramadan 2011. The living conditions were difficult, and there were checkpoints and security. I came to [host country] legally through the borders. I was sick for a week after I was released, and then I came here with my family.

- (Female, 44, fled Oct. 2011) Protests started, and then shooting started. It increased until we felt unsafe. Then they [Rebels] were rumored to have started taking girls and raping them. Every Friday the rebels passed in front of the house in protests. My daughters used to use a different road to reach home from school, so we were scared that we would get harmed. I came directly from Al-Qusayr to [host country].

- (Female, 45, fled Mar. 2012) My house was raided twice by the Shabiha and Security. I could tell they were Shabiha because of how they looked and dressed; they wore black sweat suits and sneakers. Some of them were wearing green military clothing with helmets and military boots. The military would enter first, and then the Shabiha, to make sure the army has arrested the youth and interrogated the people. They vandalized the house and the furniture. They raided houses looking for men participating in demonstrations and looking for weapons. In March 2012, I was hiding with my husband and children at a house with four men and their kids. The Shabiha came and told the men to come out after hammering on the door. I tried to hide my husband behind me, but one of the Shabiha told him, “Come out, you bastard.” I also tried to hide my 12-year-old son, but one of the Shabiha told him, “Come out, you are not a man, you are not in the army.” My husband was taken to a school nearby and tortured and killed. A few days later the city was surrounded by Shabiha with an army of tanks. One of the regime members threatened to burn down the neighborhood, which did eventually happen.

- (Female, 22, fled Mar. 2012) We left because of fear of the mortar shelling from Bashar’s army. We were afraid of being killed. My husband was hit in the leg as he was going to buy bread. A month and a half later, he was injured again by shrapnel in his thigh. After that, we left Syria. We were afraid of being arrested.

- (Male, 54, fled Apr. 2012) There was random shelling on the district. I hid in the attic for ten days, during which time a mortar bomb hit my car. Many houses in the neighborhood were destroyed or burned. Three bombs blew holes in the ceiling of my house, broke glass and windows. Later, opposition fighters arrived and advised us to leave the area for our safety.
• (Male, 19, fled Summer 2012) We left because of sectarianism. It became sectarian because we didn't participate in the protests. The armed individuals started shooting at us and shell ing us. Muslims started the attacks. There were 14,000 Christians in Al-Qusayr. Clashes started between the army and the armed individuals, by shooting and shelling rockets. The protesters lied. They said that they were unarmed and that they don't have weapons, but they did. They threatened people in the army and those who worked for the government and they told them to leave. Also, they threatened shop owners, and told them to shut down their shops to show that they are also protesting and that everyone supports the revolution. Those who refused to shut down their shops were shot at. In this situation, we could only stay for one month. When they attacked [a government facility], the army sent reinforcements and the armed groups started attacking them. All this was next to our house. In early incidents, they shouted "Christians to Beirut, and Alawites to the grave."

• (Female, 39, fled June 2012) There was repeated shelling. I was pregnant and delivered by C-section. My home in Syria was shelled six days after I gave birth, and my C-section wound reopened. We left one month later because of the aerial strikes on homes. I feared for my family. Half of our home was destroyed while we were in it.

• (Male, 31, fled June 2012) I fled from the shelling and the destruction. I was hit by Security bullets during a demonstration in Ramadan 2011. I was injured with about 50 people. Nine people died in front of me; they were wearing civilian clothing. I could not receive treatment as the government knows no mercy. The Air Force Intelligence raided my home wearing military uniforms in Sept. 2011, but I ran away to my neighbor's home. There were tanks shelling, and the schools, hospitals, and mosques were shelled. We lost security. My parents were in our house when the army came into my home.

• (Female, 27, fled July 2012) I left because of the security problems. There were explosions everywhere. Almost all of the water tanks on the roofs were destroyed, and there were holes everywhere. There were snipers on the buildings. There was fighting between the FSA and SAA all the time. The FSA was hiding, so the SAA made sure to destroy all of the buildings so the FSA could not hide. There was shelling all the time.

• (Male, 35, fled July 2012) I was wanted by the government because I had been helping wounded rebels. I started helping in April 2012. The security forces put wanted persons' names on the lists at the checkpoints and then locate you. My friend in the security force told me he had seen my name on the computer. My father wanted me to leave with my children; we left by car.

• (Male, 35, fled Oct. 2012) One of my brothers has been detained by Syrian Security since August 2011. My other brother was shot in the arm in April 2011 during a demonstration. Syrian Intelligence detained and interrogated me in August 2011. I left because of the bombardment and because my house was invaded more than ten times.
I did not witness all of these invasions because I was usually warned before they arrived. I used my home as a field hospital helping injured people. I was never involved in fighting with the FSA; I just participated as a humanitarian worker for the cause.

- (Male, 38, fled Dec. 2012) We left because I was detained and my children suffered severe trauma. I have two children. They shiver when they hear the sound of bullets and bombs. My home was raided when I was not home. When I came back, my possessions were destroyed and my cell phone was stolen. There was the constant fear of going out and not returning home. I was threatened by a soldier when my sister’s home was raided. The city was raided by a group of soldiers; some were in uniform and others were in civilian clothing.

- (Male, 30, fled Dec. 2012) I saw a massacre with my own eyes during the Army’s raid. They were wearing yellow arm bands and were called the Scorpion Task Force (or the Massacre Task Force). They executed about 60 people in front of me... Before they executed them, they searched the houses. We were raided many times; during the raids they would beat and assault us. They raided my house in March 2012, and I was arrested by the Air Force Intelligence. I stayed there about ten months.

- (Female, 41, fled Jan. 2013) They didn’t want us anymore because we are Sunnis. The sectarianism was bad. We left because they kidnapped my husband; it was a message. My neighbors said that Shabiha took him. I lost hope that my husband would return, so I came here. In early December, men in uniform with beards, carrying rifles, raided our house and beat my 22-year-old son. I suspect this happened because we are Sunnis among Christians and Alawites. I was scared for my children, especially after my son was beaten. So we decided to leave.

- (Female, 37, fled Feb. 2013) We did not have electricity or work. There were three months without electricity. The army inspected our neighborhood twice. There was shooting day and night. And I have seen tanks. They even came into the street where I live. They bombed all the time. When I left, my neighborhood was empty. After my son went to work in the evening they would shoot, so I told him not to come back. I couldn’t see my mother for a long time. I was told my cousin is dead.

H. Idlib

- (Female, 60, fled 2011) We were very afraid because of all of the shelling. There were snipers on the school roofs; they were sniping people who were getting food. We slept in the grottos. We left our house and came straight to [host country]. Also, the Syrian Army was searching homes looking for dissidents. My two sons have done their military service, but did not join the army once fighting began. I was afraid for them, so we left.
• (Female, 34, fled July 2012) We left because of the shelling and the lack of security. My cousin was hit by a bomb. When we saw him, we decided to leave. The army came into my house more than once, and they scared my children.

• (Female, 31, fled Oct. 2012) Every week there were protests on Friday so bombings occurred once a week, usually on Friday. But then bombardment became continuous and every day. I used to go to the fields every day and hide, and come back in the afternoon [when the bombardment stopped]. The weather was cold, and my children started getting sick as I did this for around one month. The village was bombarded by [barrel bombs] from [MiG] planes, around 12-15 bombs per day [in October 2012]. Some houses were destroyed and crops were burned. The crops, wheat and grains, were dry and easily caught fire, [which] spread in the fields. We were very scared, so I called my husband, who is working in [host country], and asked him to take us there. The situation became very hard. There was no water or electricity.

• (Female, 28, fled Feb. 2013) On August 1, 2012, our village was bombarded; we all went to hide in the shelters. All of a sudden, we started hearing loud voices. Men were coming towards us. They started shooting towards our shelter. They got inside and they took my husband, his father (my father-in-law) and my brothers-in-law. My husband was 34 years old; his father was 65 years old; and his brothers were 32, 35, and 28 years old. They tied their hands and covered their faces. We started crying and they said to us, "Don't be afraid, don't cry. We just want to interrogate them and if we find them innocent, we will return them." They were receiving orders from a man who was standing outside. They took my husband, his brothers, and his father. They let them walk few meters, and then we heard gun shots. They shot all of them.

I. Raqqa

• (Male, 36, fled June 2012) In the beginning of 2012, the Free Syrian Army entered Raqqa, and there was lots of fighting with the regime. We could not move at night; it was not safe. Raqqa was controlled by the FSA. The Syrian Army started to bomb the FSA by plane. We escaped to relatives in the suburbs. We came back and found our house hit by a bomb in May 2012. I don’t know what kind of bomb it was. We felt scared and that it was unsafe to stay, so we left.

• (Female, 38, fled Nov. 2012) We fled from the situation. There were threats to Christians. In November 2012, the FSA slipped flyers under the door of my husband’s internet shop threatening to kill all owners who opened their shops and to burn their shops. That fall, I left with my children to go to another village, but my kids were very scared. We came back to Raqqa and decided to leave, but we did not know whether to go back to [the village] or to [host country], so we came to [host country]. I heard that many explosions happened. Mainly, I was scared for the safety of my children, so they stopped going to school. The day before we came to [Lebanon], my husband told me
they [the respondent did not indicate a particular perpetrator] came and asked that all women wear the abaya and hijab. I heard the same thing from the neighbors and my relatives.

- (Female, 30, fled Dec. 2012) We left Syria because we were afraid of the violence. The villages around [our hometown] were bombarded. When the bombing attacks started coming closer to our home, we left and came to [host country].
Annex E: Illustrative Responses- Post-Conflict Redress

At the end of the survey, all respondents were asked if they would seek redress after the conflict is over for the violations or losses described, and if so, where and what kind of redress. Set forth below are illustrative responses taken from each of the locations where respondents were surveyed, representing views of refugees from the Governorates of Aleppo, Damascus/Rif Damashq, Dar’a, Hama, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib, and Raqqa.

The illustrative responses have been categorized under the following headings: Justice, Compensation, Retribution, Lack of Confidence in a Just Resolution, Peace and Repatriation, and Divine Providence. However, it is important to note that responses may fit under more than one heading. Additionally, notable responses that could not be categorized have been included under the heading “Other.” The responses are listed chronologically (earliest to most recent departure) under each heading.

A. Justice

- (Female, 53, Dar’a, fled Feb. 2012) [I hope] the regime will fall, and [I will] live in peace. [I want] trials for perpetrators. The new Syrian government has to hold trials.

- (Male, 54, Homs, fled Apr. 2012) I want my dignity to be preserved. I want all individuals and groups to be treated equally and none of the rulers to abuse authority.

- (Male, 31, Homs, fled June 2012) [I want] to live like we used to and [to] try the aggressors.

- (Female, 39, Homs, fled June 2012) [I want] to see my family safe and sound. And [I want] Bashar to be tried.

- (Male, 18, Damascus, fled June 2012) [I want] peace [and] trials.

- (Male, 42, Dar’a, fled Aug. 2012) [I want to see] the perpetrators brought to justice.

- (Female, 29, Idlib, fled Aug. 2012) I would seek justice for people who had lost loved ones. I would use international organizations or courts, anyone who could help. There should be justice, and the perpetrators should be sent to the court. We need to do what is necessary to achieve justice. Compensation is needed; everything is damaged. I would like to see reform, have the youths be employed, and businesses built.

- (Male, 46, Dar’a, fled Aug. 2012) [I want] to have an Islamic state without sectarianism [and] to hold accountable everybody who caused killing and destruction.

- (Male, 35, Homs, fled Oct. 2012) Justice should be enforced by all sides.

- (Female, 41, Homs, fled Jan. 2013) I want my husband’s rights [the respondent’s husband was abducted]. I want to know the reasons. Once I feel there is justice, then I will apply for redress. After Allah, the State will give me my rights.
• (Male, 54, Hama, fled Feb. 2013) [I want] justice, and the law must be enforced on all parties.

B. Compensation

• (Male, 19, Homs, no departure date specified) I don’t want the Muslims who attacked us to come back. The state asked for certain papers so that they can compensate us for our house. This will be a financial compensation.

• (Female, 44, Homs, no departure date specified) Redress is the best thing. The President [Assad] will help us without filing for redress. He will help people whose houses are totally destroyed.

• (Female, no age specified, Dar’a, fled Sept. 2012) I want money and help to rebuild my house.

• (Male, 57, Hasakah, fled Dec. 2012) I want there to be economic justice and there to be a fair distribution of national resources.

• (Male, 30, Damascus, fled July 2013) [I would] demand they give people back their rights, and rebuild my home because the destruction is huge. And if there are international organizations, I would demand [from them] compensation.

C. Retribution

• (Male, 32, Homs, no departure date specified) I hope to see peace and security and Bashar Al-Assad’s return. Everyone who ever picked up a weapon and killed someone for a cause or without a cause should be held accountable. I hope to return to Al-Qusayr and not find any Muslim in it. I hope that what happened to me happens to the Muslims.

• (Male, 35, Homs, fled Dec. 2011) Deport the Alawites from Syria.

• (Female, 45, Homs, fled Mar. 2012) I want the aggressors to get what they deserve from any party for what they did to the people.

• (Female, 27, Homs, fled July 2012) We were so happy living in Syria. I want them subjected to the same thing that others were subjected to in Syria.

• (Male, 39, Dar’a, fled July 2012) Execute everybody who participated in the massacres, without exception, even if they are Sunni Muslims.

• (Female, Dar’a, fled July 2012) Those who killed should be killed. First should be Bashar. He should suffer first [and] then punish him. [The redress should be] in Syria, Syrians should do it.
• (Female, 24, Homs, fled Aug. 2012) Execute Bashar and his aides as he executed our family and everybody.

• (Female, 39, Rif Damashq, fled Oct. 2012) Kill all of the aggressors.

• (Female, 26, Rif Damashq, fled Mar. 2013) If I could personally enforce justice, I would. If I was present in Dar’a at the beginning of the events, I would have made the assailants taste a bit of what they are doing. Maybe all of this wouldn’t be happening right now.

D. Lack of Confidence in a Just Resolution

• (Female, 24, Homs, no departure date specified) Of course we want justice and equality, but now I do not think that equality will prevail.

• (Male, 42, Hama, fled Jan. 2012) We don’t know what will happen after the war, with the presence of coalitions and political parties. No one can lead this country and make justice.

• (Female, 46, Idlib, fled Nov. 2012) I lost my brother who was in the SAA. I don’t know why or when, exactly. For me, nothing would compensate for his death.

• (Female, 43, Damascus, fled Nov. 2012) Nobody will do us good.

• (Gender and age not specified, Homs, fled Feb. 2013) I want to seek justice, but I don’t know what to do.

• (Male, no age specified, Dar’a, fled Mar. 2013) There is no justice. I want the regime to fail, and I want to go home.

• (Female, 33, Damascus, fled Dec. 2012) All we want as redress is to be in our homes safely. But I have no one to ask for redress, and no one will answer.

E. Divine Providence

• (Female, 38, Homs, no departure date specified) I want justice without oppression. God will hold everyone who cooperated with the regime accountable.

• (Male, 43, Dar’a, fled May 2012) God will punish [Assad].

• (Female, 34, Dar’a, fled July 2012) I ask God to [let me] go back to Syria and settle down.

• (Male, 43, Idlib, fled Sept. 2012) It is in God’s hands.

F. Peace and Repatriation

• (Male, 50, Homs, no departure date specified) I want peace, and I want the situation to be calm so that everyone returns to Syria.
• (Male, 36, Raqqa, fled June 2012) *I only want peace and security, the most important things.*

• (Female, 38, Aleppo, fled Aug. 2012) *We don’t want anything. We are ready to build again ourselves.*

• (Male, 26, Hasakah, fled Sept. 2012) *I want to go back home with my family and for there to be peace and security.*

• (Male, 25, Idlib, fled Sept. 2012) *I only wish for the situation to get better.*

• (Male, 25, Idlib, fled Oct. 2012) *I don’t want redress. I just want to return back as before.*

• (Female, 30, Raqqa, fled Dec. 2012) *I want peace, security, and to return home. I do not want any redress.*

• (Male, 27, Damascus, fled Dec. 2012) *Yes, to live in peace in [Yarmouk] Camp and feel safe and forget everything and start again from zero. Sure, I want redress if it is possible without [taking sides].*

• (Male, 49, Damascus, fled Jan. 2013) *We just wanted for things to settle down, and for conditions to improve. We just hope everything works out, and that things don’t become sectarian in Syria. We wish that all the people are satisfied with the way things work out.*

G. Other

• (Female, 30, Damascus, fled Dec. 2011) *The news is not accurate. We want neither the regime nor the rebellion.*

• (Female, Dar’a, fled Apr. 2012) *I see that there are Alawites who are against this regime. We don’t want civil war in Syria. Assad has destroyed Syria.*

• (Male, 35, Homs, fled July 2012) *I am angry about everything now. I have seen too many things.*

• (Male, 36, Aleppo, fled Aug. 2012) *I don’t think this crisis will end soon. The real civil war has not begun. 100,000 [more] people will die after the regime falls.*

• (Female, 38, Raqqa, fled Nov. 2012) *I do not want anyone from any side to be harmed. Persons on both sides were harmed, and I want to stay neutral.*

• (Female, 44, Hasakah, fled Dec. 2012) *I want to seek asylum somewhere in Europe or the United States to secure a decent life for my girls. I would go back to Syria if things go back to how they used to be.*
(Male, 56, Damascus, fled Mar. 2013) On a personal level, I don’t want anything. I just ask that they care for the Palestinians. Palestinians suffer on arrival at the borders. No one looks out for them.

(Male, 25, Homs, fled Sept. 2011) I will go to the Security Council and the United Nations, but on the other hand, there is the right to veto which is cancelling every other matter.
Annex F.  List of Acronyms

ABA ROLI  American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative
CAT  Convention Against Torture
CRC  Convention on the Rights of the Child
EU  European Union
FSA  Free Syrian Army
ICC  International Criminal Court
ICCPR  International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICRC  International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTR  International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY  International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
KDP  Kurdish Democratic Party
KNC  Kurdish National Council
KSC  Kurdish Supreme Committee
NDF  National Defense Forces
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
OPCW  Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
PFLP-General Command  Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
PKK  Kurdistan Workers’ Party
PRS  Palestinian-Syrian Refugees
PYD  Democratic Union Party
SAA  Syrian Arab Army
SGBV  Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SLF  Syrian Liberation Front
SNC  Syrian National Council
UN  United Nations
UNHCR  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA  United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC  United Nations Security Council
UNSMIS  United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria
US  United States of America
YPG  Kurdish Popular Protection Units
See Sec. 3(G), The Investigation, Reporting, and Documentation of Human Rights Abuses, for more on the origin of and further details on the “reasonable belief standard.”


3 Some resources define Damascus and Rif Damashq as separate governorates and thus refer to Syria as having 14 governorates. For the purposes of this study, Damascus is treated as a part of Rif Damashq.


5 WORLD BANK, Literacy Rate, Adult Total (% of People Ages 15 and Above), available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS/countries.

6 It is estimated that around 300,000 Syrian Kurds are stateless, largely the product of a 1962 Syrian government decision to strip 100,000 Kurds of their citizenship. REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL, Buried Alive: Stateless Kurds (Feb. 13, 2006), available at http://refugeesinternational.org/policy/in-depth-report/buried-alive-stateless-kurds-syria.

7 World Factbook: Syria, supra note 3.


9 Id.


23 Houla Report, supra note 21, at ¶30.


25 More detail as to various armed groups active in Syria and how they are categorized for the purposes of this report is provided in Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups.


27 AFP, Syria Builds Paramilitary Force Aided by Iran: NGO (Jan. 21, 2013), available at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/AlLeqM5ieoZUM4NwsS_cKdGDUqWB0zL5w?docId=CNG.57fbc89c875ff2813e5605f4e70d382.1f1 [hereinafter AFP].


29 AFP, supra note 27.

30 Dimitar Bechev, Syria: The Kurdish View, EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (June 24, 2013), http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_syria_the_kurdish_view142 [hereinafter Bechev].
The KDP is led by Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq.


Common Article III applies “[i]n the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply.” *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field* art. 3, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3114, 75 U.N.T.S. 31 [hereinafter COMMON ARTICLE III].

It seems that Syria may, in fact, meet the requirements in Additional Protocol II, including command structure in non-state groups and their control of territory. Some organizations are advocating for this classification. See, e.g., *Syria: Applicable International Law*, GENEVA ACADEMY OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS’ RULE OF LAW IN ARMED CONFLICT PROJECT (last updated July 13, 2012), available at http://www.genevaacademy.ch/RULAC/applicable_international_law.php?id_state=211.

Under the ICCPR, states may restrict certain rights during so-called public emergencies. However, these situations must be exceptional and temporary, and "limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation." Further, international human rights law requires that certain fundamental principles can never be derogated from and must always be upheld, even in emergency situations and during war. ICCPR GENERAL COMMENT NO. 29: ARTICLE 4: DEROGATIONS DURING A STATE OF EMERGENCY, HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, 72nd Sess., Aug. 31, 2001, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.11 (Aug. 31, 2001) (referring to ICCPR art. 4); see also Appendix (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syrian Conflict.


*Id.*
Interviews were not audio-recorded in order to ensure the security and comfort of respondents. The testimonies reproduced in this report are based on interviewer notes, and thus are therefore not always verbatim recitations, but are consistent with the notes taken by the interviewer.

Treaty law does not define the term “armed groups.” However, under international humanitarian law, in order to be classified as parties in a non-international armed conflict, armed groups may be highly organized, with strong hierarchy and chain of command; or decentralized, with semi-autonomous or splinter factions; or may have more or less territorial control, ability to train members, and carry out disciplinary measures. When assessing whether hostilities amount to non-international armed conflict; however, the ICRC places great importance upon armed groups’ level of organizational sophistication (e.g., whether forces are under a command structure, and whether they have the “capacity to sustain military operations”).

Respondents sometimes used the phrase “arbitrary arrest” or “arbitrary detention,” but in most instances gave accounts that indicated that they or others (who they witnessed) were arrested without justification, or for reasons that do not constitute legally sound justifications for arrests, or without arrest warrants. For the purposes of this study, if the respondent’s story met the reasonable belief threshold, as well as the legal definitions, it was coded as arbitrary arrest. This figure reflects those arrests that met the reasonable belief standard of “arbitrary arrest.”

While the survey methodology allows us to quantify the number of arrests, it does not quantify the reasons for arrest.

The torture method known as the tire(dulab) involves forcing the victim into a vehicle tire, which is often hoisted up, with the victim hanging from the tire while being beaten on the feet (called falaqa) or elsewhere on the body. These beatings employ fists, sticks, whips, or cables. See AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, ‘I Wanted to Die’: Syria’s Torture Survivors Speak Out,’ 11 (2012), available at http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/016/2012/en/708c3f40-538e-46a9-9798-ebae27f56946/mde240162012en.pdf.

Unless otherwise specified in this report, the date listed following the respondent account refers to the date of the incident.
[hereinafter ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I]; ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II supra note 56 at art. 4(2); see generally CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE, supra note 44; ICCPR, supra note 44 at art. 7.

63 Events were only recorded as killings (through torture) for the purposes of the quantitative study if the victim was from the same household as the respondent or the respondent witnessed the act of torture that lead to the killing.

64 To be “offered coffee” is an Arabic euphemism indicating interrogation or enduring illegal questioning and investigation.

65 The method of torture named the “flying carpet” refers to “being blindfolded, stripped down to the underpants and strapped to a foldable wooden board. Each end of the board is then elevated so that the victim’s head and feet are brought closer and closer together, causing immense pain in the lower back. All the while, he or she is beaten.” PBS FRONTLINE, Syria One Year Later: Growing Evidence of Torture, Detainee Abuse (Mar. 14, 2012), available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/syria-undercover/syria-one-year-later-growing-evidence-of-torture-detainee-abuse/.


69 For more details on the participation of pro-government popular committees in the Syria conflict, see Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups.

70 Non-witnessed reports of women being arrested or abducted by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups were cited by survey respondents as a reason for leaving, and were associated with fear of sexual violence. See Section 4(G)(i), Reports Indicating Rape and SGBV by Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups; see also Annex (D), Illustrative Responses: Reasons for Leaving Syria.

71 See COMMON ARTICLE III, supra note 40; ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I, supra note 62 at art. 75(2)(a); ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 4(2)(a); ICCPR, supra note 44 at art. 6; ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 8(2)(a)(i).

72 See Section 4(B)(ix), Children: Deliberate Targeting and the Failure to Protect, for further examples.


74 The rally occurred in June 2011.

75 Dates contained in this report are as reported by the respondents and have not been adjusted for accuracy. It is common for respondents to given incorrect dates, particularly when significant time has lapsed (in the case of this testimony, two years) since the event reported.
The exact numbers of sniper attacks reported by respondents cannot be determined, as our survey methodology did not contemplate recording such frequencies.

The ICRC reports that “some texts refer to respect for the ‘dignity’ of a person or the prohibition of ‘ill-treatment.’” See id.

ICPR, supra note 44 at art 17.

See id.

See id.

ROMÉ STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 8(2)(b)(i); ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I, supra note 62 at arts. 51(4)(a) and 51(5)(a); ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 13(2); Rule 12. Definition of Indiscriminant Attacks, ICRC CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule12 [hereinafter ICRC Rule 12].

Launching of military objectives from populated areas by Anti-Regime Armed Groups also constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and is discussed under Section 4(C), Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups.

This question was intended to inform the study as to respondent perceptions, and was not coded for the purposes of the quantitative dataset. As a result, these characterizations have not been quantified.

The responsibility of Anti-Regime Armed Groups for positioning military objectives in densely populated areas is discussed in Section 4(C), Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups.


CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, supra note 44 at art. 1.

Id. at art. 38.

Id.; Rule 135. Children, ICRC: CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_cha_chapter39_rule135; ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I, supra note 62 at art. 77(1); ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 43(3); CONVENTION IV, supra note 41 at arts. 23-24, 38, 50, 76, and 89.

The incidents reported here include some second-hand accounts because minors (individuals under 18 years of age) did not qualify to be surveyed in this study.

Descriptions of some of the largest and most active Anti-Regime Armed Groups are set forth in Annex (C), Descriptions of Armed Groups.

See Section 6(C), Perpetrator Identification.

See also ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II; supra note 56 at art. 51(3); COMMON ARTICLE III, supra note 40.

Yarmouk Camp is an “unofficial” refugee camp for Palestinians in Syria. It is home to the largest Palestinian refugee community in Syria. Are Knudsen & Saru Hanafi, PALESTINIAN REFUGEES: IDENTITY, SPACE AND PLACE IN THE LEVANT, 40 (2010).

95 The identifications of armed groups by respondents are difficult to corroborate with independent secondary sources, and we cannot confirm their accuracy. The specific identifications contained in these quotes are not asserted to be correct beyond the general categorization of “Anti-Regime Armed Groups.”

96 The respondents who reported leaving Al-Qusayr during that period and expressed this view were Christian. Their perception as to Anti-Regime Armed Groups’ activities in Al-Qusayr are discussed in greater detail in Section 4(I), Analysis and Perceptions by Subgroup.

97 This example is not drawn from the representative sample.


99 It should be noted that the term “abduction” is sometimes equated with the term “enforced disappearance,” though these terms apply to actions by non-state actors differently depending upon context. The Rome Statute recognizes enforced disappearances committed by non-state actors because it defines enforced disappearance as “the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time.” However, as noted by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which operates under the mandate of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the term “enforced disappearances” in any other context appears to apply only to actions undertaken by “officials of different branches or levels of Government or by organized groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the Government.” See ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 7(1)(i) (cited in Vol. II, Ch. 32, § 2372); art. 7(2)(i); OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, GENERAL COMMENT ON THE DEFINITION OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE, (last visited Nov. 5, 2013), available at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disappearances/disappearance_gc.pdf.

100 ICCPR GENERAL COMMENT NO. 29: ARTICLE 4: DEROGATIONS DURING A STATE OF EMERGENCY, 72nd Sess., Aug. 31, 2001, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.11 (Aug. 31, 2001) (referring to ICCPR art. 4); see Annex (B), International Legal Standards Applicable to the Syria Conflict, for further details on the multiple international law sources that discuss this violation.

101 In all likelihood, the respondent was referring to a Kalashnikov; typical slang for this weapon among respondents was “Roussie.”

102 The prohibition on torture is set forth in Section 4(B)(ii), Torture and Cruel Treatment.

103 For more details on how torture was defined for the purposes of this study, see id.
As discussed elsewhere in this report, customary human rights law protections are increasingly seen as applicable to non-state actors. Non-state actors are encouraged to also respect the human rights law protections that are not widely viewed as customary law norms, such as ICCPR art. 17’s protection of the right to privacy. For an example of a UN Special Rapporteur statement encouraging non-state actors to protect non-customary law norms, see UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, *Human Rights Defenders* 20 (Aug. 4, 2010) U.N. Doc. A/65/223, available at http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/475/01/PDF/N1047501.pdf?OpenElement. There were also multiple allegations of looting of homes by both Syrian Government Forces and Anti-Regime Armed Groups. However, the vast majority of accounts were not witnessed and are, therefore, discussed under Section 4(F), Unattributed Incidents.

However, Convention III is not applicable to the Syrian conflict, since it is a non-international conflict.

Sunni Muslims and Christians (various sects) were the only religious groups represented in the survey. For further explanation, see Section 6(A), Challenges in Reaching Diverse Populations. Respondents were asked, “Were you or any members of your household harmed? In what way?” Respondents were then asked to specify, *inter alia*, incident location, date, perpetrator, and perpetrator physical description.

Religion of the household is identified by religion of the respondent.

A table showing respondent demographics by: age, gender, ethnicity, religion and education level is set forth in Section 5, Project Methodology.

The data in this table is collected from 2 questions: “Were your any member of your household harmed?”; and “Did your household own property or things that were destroyed or stolen?” Ethnicity of the household in this Graphic was identified by ethnicity of the respondent from that household.

See Section 4(J), Harms by Governorate, for further details on this topic.

For the purposes of this study, complete destruction of an area is recorded where the respondent reports that 75% or more of the area has been destroyed (i.e. the buildings are unlivable or unusable).

For more details on respondents’ attitudes towards post-conflict redress, see Annex (E), Illustrative Responses: Post-Conflict Redress.

Stratified sampling is a random sample in which the researcher first identifies a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, divides the sampling frame by the categories, and then uses random selection to select cases from each category.

At the time the survey began in Jordan in January 2013, approximately 250,000 Syrian refugees were registered or awaiting registration with UNRWA in Jordan. At the time surveying began in Lebanon in February 2013, 309,997 refugees had registered or were awaiting registration with UNRWA in Lebanon. In addition, tens of thousands of Palestinian-Syrian refugees had crossed into Jordan and Lebanon and registered for assistance through UNRWA. By the time of completion of surveying in August 2013, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan had increased threefold, and hundreds of thousands more are estimated to have crossed the border into Lebanon and Jordan without registering with UN agencies for assistance.
As discussed elsewhere in this report, a small number of non-random interviews were also conducted with respondents in areas of Beirut.

On average, ABA ROLI targeted 50 interviews for each stratum it wanted to analyze.

See supra note 2 for a definition of “household” for the purposes of this report.

A Kish grid is a numerical table used to randomize the selection of individuals from a group without bias.

Local investigators were selected based on relevant experience and education, and were carefully vetted. Local investigators were trained in core principles of human rights and international humanitarian law, investigation techniques, and survey methodology. Initial and follow-up trainings took place in Amman, Jordan and Beirut, Lebanon. ABA ROLI staff and consultants supervised initial interviews, and feedback was provided to local investigators on an ongoing basis, based on survey results and supervisor observations.

An additional 35 qualitative interviews were conducted in Lebanon.

The subgroup was comprised of a majority of Syriacs and Assyrians who were registered with a community-based group that has worked with those communities since before the conflict and is not exclusively focused on humanitarian assistance.

Arab refers to “Syrian Arab.” Palestinians are referred to separately for the purposes of the survey.

“Other” includes Shia Islam, Druze, no religion, and other religions.

This figure does not include Alawites, Druze, and Shiites (Ismailis).

See Section 4(F), Unattributed Incidents.

See generally Section 4(C), Abuses by Anti-Regime Armed Groups.


Neither the UNHCR nor the UNRWA is able to meet the needs of the growing number of registered refugees. Existing funds are sufficient to meet only 62% of the UNHCR’s estimated costs. UNHCR, *Syria Regional Refugee Response: Jordan* (last visited Sept. 6, 2013), available at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107 [hereinafter UNRWA Jordan Data]. This has raised tensions both within refugee populations and with local communities across the region.

Id.

Id.


At the time the research team conducted surveys in Cyber City, the number of residents was higher. UNRWA Jordan Data, supra note 129.


137 Id.


141 Dimi Reider, *Syria: The View from Israel* (Jul. 20, 2013), EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, available at http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_syr flowing-for-commentary_syr-ia_the_view_from_israel141.


144 Hayder Al-Khoei, supra note 143.


146 Jubin Goodarzi, *Syria: The View from Iran*, EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (June 16, 2013), available at http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_syr flowing-for-commentary_syr-ia_the_view_from_iran137.

147 Id.


152 Id. at 23-39.

153 ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 1(1).


155 Id. at 180.

156 Id. at 188-189.

157 Several organizations are advocating for this classification. See, e.g., GENEVA ACADEMY OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS’ RULE OF LAW IN ARMED CONFLICT PROJECT, Syria: Applicable International Law (last updated July 13, 2012), available at http://www.genevaacademy.ch/RULAC/applicable_international_law.php?id_state=211.

158 Common Article III applies “[i]n the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties.” COMMON ARTICLE III, supra note 40.

159 COMMON ARTICLE III, supra note 40.

160 See id.

161 For the purposes of this report, “combatants” refers to members of Anti-Regime Armed Groups, without precise legal definition and without any privileges accorded to “combatants” in international armed conflict. As explained by the ICRC, there is no clear definition for exactly who is considered a non-state fighter in a non-international armed conflict. The ICRC notes:

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II refer to “armed forces” and Additional Protocol II also refers to “dissident armed forces and other organized armed groups.” These concepts are not further defined in the practice pertaining to non-international armed conflicts. While State armed forces may be considered combatants for purposes of the principle of distinction, practice is not clear as to the situation of members of armed opposition groups. Practice does indicate, however, that persons do not enjoy the protection against attack accorded to civilians when they take a direct part in hostilities. Persons taking a direct part in hostilities in non-international armed conflicts are sometimes labeled “combatants.” For example, in a resolution on respect for human rights in armed conflict adopted in 1970, the UN General Assembly speaks of “combatants in all armed conflicts.” More recently, the term “combatant” was used in the Cairo Declaration and Cairo Plan of Action for both types of
conflicts. However, this designation is only used in its generic meaning and indicates that these persons do not enjoy the protection against attack accorded to civilians, but this does not imply a right to combatant status or prisoner-of-war status, as applicable in international armed conflicts. The lawfulness of direct participation in hostilities in non-international armed conflicts is governed by national law. While such persons could also be called “fighters,” this term would be translated as “combatant” in a number of languages and is therefore not wholly satisfactory either.


164 Id. at 33-34.


Ghouta Report, supra note 37.


UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, supra note 46, at 5-6 (“It is widely recognized nowadays by the international community that since human rights obligations derive from the recognition of inherent rights of all human beings and that these rights could be affected both in times of peace and in times of war, international human rights law continues to apply in situations of armed conflict.”).


UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, supra note 46 at 27.

Id. at 24-25; see also generally INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF THE RED CROSS, HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS (Sept. 2006), available at http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/irrc_863_clapham.pdf.

ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 5.

For a full list of prosecutable crimes, see id. arts. 7, 8.

Id. art. 25.

Id. art. 28.

Id. art. 13.


See ICCPR supra note 44 at art. 9.


See ICRC Rule 99, supra note 186.
The Rome Statute indicates that this crime could be perpetrated by state and non-state actors alike as it applies in both international and non-international armed conflicts, as long as the victim is a protected person under the Geneva Conventions. See Rome Statute, supra note 68 at art. 8(2)(c)(iii); see also Rule 96. Hostage-Taking, ICRC: Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule96 [hereinafter ICRC Rule 96].

ICRC Rule 96, supra note 190.

Id.

Id.

See Common Article III, supra note 40.

See Rome Statute, supra note 68 at arts. 7-8.

Additional Protocol I, supra note 62 at art. 75(2)(c).

Rome Statute, supra note 68 at art. 8; Rwanda Statute supra note 98 at art. 4; Sierra Leone Statute supra note 98 at art. 3.

Rome Statute, supra note 68 at art. 7.

CRC Rule 90, supra note 68, citing, e.g., ICCPR, supra note 44 at art. 7; European Convention on Human Rights art. 3 (1953) [hereinafter European Convention]; American Convention on Human Rights art. 5 (1978) [hereinafter American Convention]; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights art. 5 (1986) [hereinafter African Charter]; CRC, supra note 86 at art. 27; see also generally Convention Against Torture, supra note 44; Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture (1985); European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987).

Convention Against Torture, supra note 44 at Part I art. 1.

Rome Statute, supra note 68 at art. 7(2)(i).

See id. at art. 7(1)(i). The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances contains a nearly identical definition of this violation. Syria has not ratified this Convention.


Rule 89. Violence to Life, ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule89 [hereinafter ICRC Rule 89], citing, e.g., Nuremberg Charter, supra note 98 at art. 6(b); see also Common Article III, supra note 40.

See Common Article III, supra note 40.
ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 4(2)(A); ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 8(2)(a)(i); ICTY STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 2(a) (1993, as amended 2002); RWANDA STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 4(a); SIERRA LEONE STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 3(a).


ICCPR supra note 44 at art. 6; AMERICAN CONVENTION supra note 199 at art. 4; AFRICAN CHARTER supra note 199 at art. 4.

ICRC Rule 89, supra note 206, citing ICCPR supra note 44 at arts. 6, 4(2), G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI) (1976); AMERICAN CONVENTION supra note 199 at art. 27(2); EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS supra note 199 at art. 15(2); AFRICAN CHARTER, supra note 199 at art. 4. The ICRC further notes that the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights “does not provide for any derogation of its provisions in a state of emergency, and Article 15 of the European Convention states that the right to life is non-derogable, except for ‘lawful acts of war’ in a situation which amounts to armed conflict.” ICRC Rule 89.


ICRC reports that “some texts refer to respect for the ‘dignity’ of a person or the prohibition of ‘ill-treatment.’” See id.


RWANDA STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 4(a); SIERRA LEONE STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 3(a).

See, e.g., Human Rights Committee Gen. Comment 20, Article 7 (44th Session, 1992) UN Doc. HRI/GEN/1/REV.1 at 3.


ICCR, supra note 44 at art. 17.


Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute defines crimes against humanity:

(1) For the purpose of this Statute, "crime against humanity" means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack (emphasis added):

... (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court.

ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 7(1).

Additional Protocol II, supra note 56 at art. 13(2); see generally Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (Dec. 2, 1983) [hereinafter Amended Protocol II].

Military objectives, by comparison, are “limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose partial or total destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offer[] a definite military advantage.” Rule 8. Definition of Military Objective, ICRC CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule8; Amended Protocol II, supra note 223 at art. 1(3); Protocol III to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons art. 2 (as amended) (Dec. 2, 1983) [hereinafter Protocol III to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons].


Rule 54. Attacks Against Objects Indispensable to the Survival of the Civilian Population, ICRC CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule54. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive.

ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 8(2)(e)(i).


ICRC Rule 12, supra note 81.

Customary IHL dictates that parties to a conflict must take “[a]ll feasible precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks.” Rule 22. Principle of Precautions Against the Effects of Attacks, ICRC CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule22.

ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 13(3).


ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I, supra note 62 at art. 51(5)(b); ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II supra note 56 at art. 3(3); AMENDED PROTOCOL II supra note 223 at art. 3(8).

ICRC Rule 14, supra note 236.

Id.


The minimum age for participation in hostilities is generally regarded to be 15 or 18. See Rule 136. Recruitment of Child Soldiers, ICRC CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule136; Rule 137. Participation of Child Soldiers in Hostilities, ICRC CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW DATABASE, available at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule137; see also ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I, supra note 62 at art. 77; ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 4; CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, supra note 44 at art. 44; ICRC Rule 131, supra note 243. Although there have been no substantiated allegations by survey respondents of child soldiers acting on behalf of Syrian Government Forces and Affiliated Groups, it bears mentioning that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, Article 2, holds that there may be no compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18. See OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT art. 2, United Nations Treaty Collection. Article 3 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child dictates that states raise minimum voluntary conscription age in reflection of the Convention, considering that children under 18 receive special protection, and must ensure that children under 18 join voluntarily, with full knowledge of the undertaken commitments, and with informed consent of their parents/guardians. Upon ratification of the Optional Protocol, the Government of Syria declared that “the statutes in force and the legislation applicable to the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Arab Republic do not permit any person under 18 years of age to join the active armed forces or the reserve bodies or formations and do not permit the enlistment of any person under that age.” Under Article 4 of that Protocol,
armed groups that are not part of the State should not recruit or use persons under 18 in hostilities under any circumstances, and shall take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment.


255 See id.


257 ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 56 at art. 13(1).

258 This customary international humanitarian law principle is codified and reflected in Additional Protocol II, the Rome Statute, and in the Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

259 Id.

260 Additional Protocol II, supra note 56 at art. 13(1).


262 The crime of pillage is also included in the ICTY Statute and the Sierra Leone Statute. ICTY STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 3(e); SIERRA LEONE STATUTE, supra note 98 at art 3(f).


264 ICRC Rule 51, supra note 224.

265 See ROME STATUTE supra note 68 at art. 7(1).


267 See, e.g., NUREMBERG CHARTER, supra note 98 at art. 6(b); COMMON ARTICLE III, supra note 40 at art. 3; CONVENTION II, supra note 41 at art. 3; CONVENTION III, supra note 41 at art. 3; CONVENTION IV, supra note 41 at art. 3; see also generally ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL I, supra note 62; see also generally ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL II, supra note 57, at art. 4(2)(a); ROME STATUTE, supra note 67 at art. 8(2)(a)(i); ICTY STATUTE, supra note 98, at art. 2(a); RWANDA STATUTE, supra note 98, at art. 4(a); SIERRA LEONE STATUTE, supra note 98 at art. 3(a).


It should be noted that the term “abduction” is sometimes equated with the term “enforced disappearance,” though these terms apply differently to actions by non-state actors, depending upon context. The Rome Statute addresses enforced disappearances committed by non-state actors because it defines enforced disappearance as “the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time.” However, as noted by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which operates under the mandate of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, the term “enforced disappearances” in any other context appears to apply only to actions undertaken by “officials of different branches or levels of Government or by organized groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the Government.” See Rome Statute art. 7(1)(i) (cited in Vol. II, Ch. 32, § 2372); art. 7(2)(i); OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, GENERAL COMMENT ON THE DEFINITION OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE (last visited Nov. 5, 2013), available at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disappearances/disappearance_gc.pdf.

Arbitrary deprivation of liberty is further discussed under Section 4(B)(i), Arbitrary Arrest and Detention.

Torture is discussed further under Section 4(B)(ii), Torture and Cruel Treatment.

For further discussion of these issues, see Section 4(C)(ii), Killing of Civilians.

ICRC Rule 123, supra note 204.

ICRC Rule 105, supra note 252.

ICRC Rule 117, supra note 205.


ICRC Rule 52, supra note 220.


Customary international law norms protecting private property against confiscation are discussed more thoroughly in Section 4(C)(i), Use of Civilian Areas for Military Objectives.


ICRC Rule 93, supra note 248.


On numerous occasions the Human Rights Committee has interpreted ICCPR Art. 7 as requiring states to protect their citizens against rape. See, e.g., Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations: Hungary,


ICRC Rule 93, supra note 248.

ROME STATUTE, supra note 68 at art. 7(1)(g).

Id. at art. 7(1)(h).

Id. at arts. 8(2)(b)(xxii) and (e)(vi).

The ICTR prosecuted rape as an act of genocide where rape was committed with “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group” through impregnating women with children bearing the rapist’s national, ethnic, racial, or religious identity as a paternally-associated trait. See Prosecutor v. Akayesu, Case ICTR-96-4-T, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Judgment (Sept. 2, 1998) at paras. 507-508, available at http://www.unictr.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Akayesu/judgement/akay001.pdf; see also ROME STATUTE supra note 68 at art. 6.


Id.
According to the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the term Shabiha may also be used informally to refer to the official security services alongside whom the Shabiha fight. See Syrian Thugs Are Assad’s Tool in Protest Crackdown, Groups Say, BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK (June 1, 2011), available at http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-06-01/syrian-thugs-are-assad-s-tool-in-protest-crackdown-groups-say.html.

Assad’s ‘Shabiha’ Terrorize Syrians After Shelling, NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO (June 8, 2012), available at http://www.npr.org/2012/06/08/154600984/assads-shabiha-terrorize-syrians-after-shelling (interview with author of a book on Syria, defining Shabiha in 2012 as “primarily Alawites and Christians who go into areas after the regime shells those areas and then kills and terrorizes the civilian population”).

Security Force members who operate in official uniform are identified as Amen (Security) and classified under Armed Forces.


Elhanan Miller, Hezbollah Burying Hundreds of Its Fighters in Syria, Rebels Claim, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL (July 24, 2013), available at http://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-buried-hundreds-of-fighters-in-syria-rebels-claim/ (picturing Hezbollah fighters in camouflage and red beret at a funeral); see also, e.g., Nicholas Blanford, Syrian Regime Battles Rebels for Control of Highway to Its Safe Haven, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR (Feb. 22, 2013), available...


318 FULTON at 7, supra note 312.

319 Iran Study, supra note 317.


See, e.g., Rania Abouzeid, *Interview with Official of Jabhat al-Nusra, Syria’s Islamist Militia Group*, TIME (Dec. 25, 2012), available at http://world.time.com/2012/12/25/interview-with-a-newly-designated-syrias-jabhat-al-nusra/ (“In addition to its civilian detractors, many more secular-minded fighters are wary of the group’s social conservatism, but insist that its brand of ultraconservative Islam will not find a home in any post-Assad Syria. These fighters often say that they will “deal” with conservative groups like Jabhat al-Nusra later, but that right now they need them in the fight against Assad. Other rebels view Jabhat al-Nusra as a transient jihadi group that will move onto foreign fronts like Afghanistan or Gaza after the fall of Assad.”)


341 See Roggio, supra note 336.

342 Lund, supra note 342.

343 Id.

344 Id.


348 Zana Khasraw, Where Are the Syrian Kurds Heading Amidst the Civil War in Syria?, OPENDEMOCRACY (July 22, 2013). The two groups’ tenuous coalition appears to be fracturing. Id. (“In June 2013 the two main components of this Committee failed to reconcile their differences, leaving the PYD and KNC each with 50 per cent of the committee.”) For more details see Bechev, supra note 31.


352 Bechev, supra note 31.
