

# American war planes slaughter civilians in northern Syria

Thomas Gaist  
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Airstrikes by American warplanes killed dozens of civilians around the Syrian village of al-Tukhar on Monday. An estimated 85 civilians, including at least 11 children, were killed in the strikes. Ordered by US Central Command (CENTCOM), the bombing raid destroyed many of the village's clay structures. The actual death toll may be much higher, with unknown numbers buried beneath the rubble.

The attacks produced "the largest loss of civilian life by coalition operations in Syria" to occur in a single day, and probably violated international law, according to Amnesty International. The strikes were supposedly aimed at Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) tactical units near the village, and no effort was made to locate or avoid nearby civilians. American commanders failed to "take the necessary precaution to avoid civilians casualties," Amnesty said.

"Whole families were killed in the attack," a local source told *Middle East Eye*.

The Obama administration's bombing campaign against Syria, launched in 2014, has claimed between 500-700 civilian lives, according to independent estimates. Since 2011, the destabilization campaign organized by American imperialism against the Syrian government of Bashar al Assad has led to the deaths of as many as 470,000.

At least 104 civilians have been killed in the area around al-Tukhar since May, as the US has escalated its air campaign in support of proxy forces organized by Washington under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The US-backed SDF militias, a "multi-ethnic" force largely dominated by Kurdish elements, are involved in a nearly two-month old campaign aimed at capturing Manbij, a strategic northern city held by ISIS, where more than 70,000 civilians remain trapped without

basic services.

"Civilians are being killed as they attempt to flee. Families are unable to access cemeteries and are burying their relatives in their gardens," UN Human Rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said Tuesday.

"The town has no electricity or water at present, and no medical faculties are known to be operating," Hussein said.

While the Kurdish-led SDF has registered recent successes, it is increasingly obvious that Russia's military intervention in Syria, launched in September 2015, has brought the Al Qaeda-linked militias serving as American proxy forces against the Assad regime to the verge of a catastrophic defeat. The CIA-financed "rebel" militias are largely surrounded by Russian-backed Syrian ground forces. In response, the Obama administration initiated negotiations with Moscow earlier in July aimed at securing Russian support for a military cooperation pact, a last ditch maneuver aimed at preserving the remnants of the opposition groups.

US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed to "concrete steps" toward a military pact Tuesday.

"We have an understanding of the direction we are going. Our teams will meet shortly to bolster the cessations of hostilities, and in order to increase our capacity to fight back against Al Qaeda," Kerry said after telephone discussions with Lavrov.

As proposed by the White House, the deal would supposedly end Russia's air war against the majority of US-backed forces, in exchange for joint US-Russia strikes against the Al Nusra Front, Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate. How this would be accomplished, however, is far from clear.

Al Nusra has been at the forefront of an anti-Assad insurgency. US-backed militias have allied them to the

Al Qaeda affiliate and are often deployed alongside it. Al Nusra's own success has relied on a steady flow of weapons and cash to opposition forces from the US and its regional allies, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies. This is the dirty secret underlying the US "war on terrorism" in Syria.

The ongoing US-Russian negotiations are essentially a delaying tactic, aimed at salvaging the remaining US proxies and buying time to prepare a new escalation of the war, to be carried out in the wake of the 2016 US elections.

Both US presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, plan to oversee massive escalations of America's military involvement in the region once in office, including an intensified air war and deployment of additional ground forces to Syria, where hundreds of US Special Forces are already operating. This week's carnage in Aleppo represents only a foretaste of the bloodshed that will be unleashed by the next administration, whether led by a Republican or a Democrat.

Pentagon officials assured media that the murderous airstrikes in Aleppo were accidental and that the US military is taking "extraordinary precaution" to avoid civilian casualties.

Under conditions in which the US war strategy has evidently failed, and the US proxy militias face a total rout, such claims deserve extreme skepticism. Washington is lashing out with redoubled savagery against Syria, making clear that it will shed rivers of blood rather than accept a humiliating defeat that would leave the Russian-backed government firmly in power.



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