

Please cite as: EUAA, 'Sources on civilian casualties' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025.

Sources on civilian casualties

The main source on civilian fatalities in Syria used in this report is the Syrian Network of Human Rights (SNHR). The Syrian Network of Human Rights (SNHR) is a non-profit human rights organisation founded in 2011 which works on documenting human rights violations in Syria. SNHR relies on a network of volunteers in each governorate to compile lists of civilian fatalities and verify victims' identities by photo or video and by speaking with family members, witnesses, and hospitals. SNHR reports fatalities by gender, age, perpetrator, governorate, and other classifications. It only records civilian fatalities – with the exception of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, which includes armed combatants and civilians.9 Where available, information from other sources documenting civilian casualties in the Syrian conflict (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Syrian Human Rights Committee, Action on Armed Violence, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Uppsala Conflict Data Program) has been included.

Additionally, data on civilian deaths collected by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has been also included. UCDP is a 'data collection project for civil war'.10 UCDP provided EUAA with a Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) covering the reference period of the report. UCDP's methodology is explained on its website as well as its GED Codebook.11 The unit of analysis of UCDP is the 'event'12 which is defined as '[a]n incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date.'13 This leads, among other things, to 'seemingly low estimates' because 'a number of factors can preclude a potential conflict event from inclusion in the UCDP GED', for example, unclear actors or uncertainty about whether fatalities occurred.14 UCDP provides three estimates for fatalities for each event – a low estimate, a best estimate, and a high estimate. In addition, UCDP provides an estimate of the number of civilian deaths.15 According to UCDP, 'it is quite likely that there are more fatalities than given in the best estimate, but it is very unlikely that there are fewer'.16

The stricter definition of an event of UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This includes ACLED's option to assign violent events to 'unidentified armed groups'. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor to why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than events recorded by UCDP.17 In this report, UCDP data have been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Syria, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not

only includes events that meet all UCDP's set criteria (codified as 'clear' events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as 'unclear' and 'not applicable'.

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  For detailed information on SNHR's methodology see url; SNHR, Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 1,734 Civilians in Syria in 2020, Including 99 in December, 1 January 2021, url, p. 4

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  UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., url

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  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url; UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, p. 4

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  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url

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  UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, p. 4

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  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url

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  UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, pp. 5, 11, 24

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  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url

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  ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, url, pp. 5–7

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