

Thursday, 13 June 2013

Video: U.N. says at least 93,000 people killed in Syria



Nisrine Hatoum, Al Arabiya, Beirut

There are 92,901 documented cases of people killed in Syria between March 2011 and the end of April 2013, Navi Pillay, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, said Thursday.

“The constant flow of killings continues at shockingly high levels, with more than 5,000 killings documented every month since last July, including a total of just under 27,000 new killings since Dec. 1,” Pillay said.

“Unfortunately... this is most likely a minimum casualty figure. The true number of those killed is potentially much higher,” she added.

The latest death toll was arrived at using a combined list of 263,055 reported killings, fully identified by the name of the victim, as well as the date and location of death.

Any reported fatality that did not include at least these three elements was excluded from the list, which was compiled using data from eight different sources.

There are 37,988 reported killings that were excluded due to insufficient information, and there is a strong likelihood that a significant number of deaths may not have been reported by any of the sources, said the statistical analysts who produced the report.

Each killing was compared to all the others in order to identify duplicates.

The analysis shows a dramatic increase in the average monthly number of documented fatalities since the beginning of the conflict, from around 1,000 per month in the summer of 2011, to an average of more than 5,000 per month since July 2012.

“This extremely high rate of killings, month after month, reflects the drastically deteriorating pattern of the conflict over the past year,” Pillay said, adding that “civilians are bearing the brunt of widespread, violent and often indiscriminate attacks which are devastating whole swathes of major towns and cities, as well as outlying villages.

“Government forces are shelling and launching aerial attacks on urban areas day in and day out, and are also using strategic missiles, and cluster and thermo-baric bombs. Opposition forces have also shelled residential areas, albeit using less fire-power, and there have been multiple bombings resulting in casualties in the heart of cities, especially Damascus.”

The greatest number of documented killings has been recorded in the governorates of Rural Damascus (17,800), Homs (16,400), Aleppo (11,900) and Idlib (10,300), followed by Daraa (8,600), Hama (8,100), Damascus (6,400) and Deir ez-Zor (5,700). The sharpest increases since Nov. 2012 were recorded in Rural Damascus and Aleppo, with 6,200 and 4,800 new documented deaths respectively.

Totals of more than 1,000 documented fatalities have been recorded in a further six governorates since Nov. 2012.

Some 82.6 percent of the documented victims are male, while 7.6 percent are female. The gender of the victim is not indicated in 9.8 percent of cases.

The analysis was not able to differentiate consistently between combatants and non-combatants, and around three-quarters of the reported deaths do not record the victim’s age.

Nevertheless, “the killings of at least 6,561 minors, including at least 1,729 children under 10 years old, have been documented,” Pillay said.

“There are also well-documented cases of individual children being tortured and executed, and entire families, including babies, being massacred –which, along with this devastatingly high death toll, is a terrible reminder of just how vicious this conflict has become,” she added.

“I urge the parties to declare an immediate ceasefire before tens of thousands more people are killed or injured,” Pillay said.

“Nobody is gaining anything from this senseless carnage, and states with influence could, if they act collectively, do a lot more to bring the conflict to a swift end, thereby saving countless more lives. The only answer is a negotiated political solution. Tragically, shamefully, nothing will restore the 93,000 or more individual lives already lost.”