

Beat: Miscellaneous

Over 90,000 killed in Syrian crisis - UN

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USPA News - The United Nations (UN) on Thursday announced that the death toll in Syria has surpassed 90,000 since the country's violent crisis broke out. In a press release, UN High Commissioner for Human rights Navi Pillay said the number of deaths in Syria continues at "shockingly high levels", detailing that more than 5,000 killings have been documented every month since last July, including a total of just under 27,000 new killings since December 1. According to an analysis carried out by data specialists on behalf of the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), at least 92,901 people were killed in fighting between the Government and forces seeking to oust President Bashar Al-Assad between March 2011 and April 2013. However, the agency warned that the actual death toll could be much higher.

"Unfortunately" this is most likely a minimum casualty figure," Pillay said. "The true number of those killed is potentially much higher," Pillay continued, urging the warring parties to declare an immediate ceasefire "before tens of thousands more people are killed or injured." Information from the eight different sources resulted in a combined list of 263,055 reported killings, fully identified by the name of the victim, as well as the date and location of the death, OHCHR said. Any reported killing that did not include at least these three elements was excluded from the list. Each reported killing was then compared to all the other reported killings in order to identify duplicates, resulting in 92,091 documented cases of individuals killed. However, many unreported deaths are probable while 37,988 reported killings containing insufficient information were excluded from the analysis. Up to 30 November 2012, a figure of 60,000 documented deaths was recorded. About 80 percent of the victims documented are male, with the sharpest increase in deaths since November 2012 in Rural Damascus and Aleppo. The Office also documented the "the killings of at least 6,561 minors, including at least 1,729 children under ten years old." "There are also well-documented cases of individual children being tortured and executed, and entire families, including babies, being massacred," Pillay said, adding that along with the devastatingly high death toll, this is a terrible reminder of "just how vicious this conflict has become." Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his latest report on the status of children in armed conflicts, cited verified reports that Syrian children are killed or injured in indiscriminate bombings, shot by snipers, used as human shields or victims of terror tactics. Pillay stated 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 thermobaric bombs," the UN human right chief said. She added, "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."

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