



HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

“No One’s Left”

Summary Executions by Syrian Forces in al-Bayda & Baniyas



“No One’s Left”
Summary Executions by Syrian Forces in
al-Bayda and Baniyas

Copyright © 2013 Human Rights Watch

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-62313-0480

Printed in the United States of America

Cover design by Rafael Jimenez

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. We stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. We investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable. We challenge governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law. We enlist the public and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all.

Human Rights Watch is an international organization with staff in more than 40 countries, and offices in Amsterdam, Beirut, Berlin, Brussels, Chicago, Geneva, Goma, Johannesburg, London, Los Angeles, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Tunis, Washington DC, and Zurich.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.hrw.org>



“No One’s Left”

Summary Executions by Syrian Forces in al-Bayda and Baniyas

- Maps..... i**
- Summary 1**
- Recommendations..... 5**
 - To the UN Security Council.....5
 - To the Syrian Government.....5
 - To All Countries 6
- Methodology..... 7**
- I. Background: Al-Bayda and Baniyas 9**
- II. Killings in al-Bayda 12**
 - The Trigger: Security Raid Ambushed, Firefight Erupts 12
 - Tense Waiting for the Local Population..... 15
 - Executions in al-Bayda 16
 - Execution of Members of Suweid Family and Neighbors 16
 - Execution of Members of Bayasi Family and Neighbors 19
 - Execution of Members of al-Shughari Family and Neighbors.....24
 - Executions and Burning of Corpses in Main Square..... 28
 - Allegations of Transfer and Execution in Neighboring Villages.....34
 - A Contested Execution: The Killing of Sheikh Omar al-Bayasi, His Wife, and His Son.....36
- III. The Aftermath: Hasty Escape, Looting and Burning 39**
- IV. Killings in Ras al-Nabe`, Baniyas 47**
 - Executions in Ras al-Nabe` 49
 - Execution of Members of the Suleiman, Taha, and Skeif Families.....50
 - Execution of Members of the Jalloul family.....53
 - Execution of Members of the Rajab Family56
 - Execution of Other Families in Ras al-Nabe` 57

V. The Perpetrators.....	60
VI. Government Denials	62
Acknowledgements	63
Annex 1: Identified Victims in al-Bayda	64
Annex 2: Identified Victims in Ras al-Nabe`	67



AL-BAYDA

LOCATION OF DOCUMENTED EXECUTIONS
IN AL-BAYDA ON MAY 2, 2013

Neighborhood where the
Shughari family was executed

Thuraya Mosque

Neighborhood where the
Bayasi family was executed

Neighborhood where the
Suweid family was executed





School

**Al-Bayda
Main Square**

Analysis Data: Human Rights Watch
Imagery Copyright: DigitalGlobe 2013
Source: Google Earth

Summary

In the morning of May 2, 2013, Syrian government forces and pro-government militias clashed with a group of opposition fighters in the town of al-Bayda, a village of about 7,000 residents ten kilometers from the coastal city of Baniyas. The clashes erupted when security forces, most likely acting on information obtained from a recently detained local activist, attempted to raid a house where some army defectors were hiding.

Around 1 p.m., the local opposition fighters retreated and government and pro-government forces entered the village and proceeded to search the houses. Over the next three hours, a familiar pattern repeated itself in most parts of al-Bayda: government and pro-government forces entered homes, separated men from women, rounded up the men of each neighborhood in one spot, and executed them by shooting them at close range.

Some executions took place inside people's homes, others outside a building or at the village main square. Many women and children were spared, but others were not; Human Rights Watch documented the execution of at least 23 women and 14 children, including some infants. In many cases, pro-government forces burnt the bodies of those they had shot. In one particularly gruesome case, security forces piled up at least 25 bodies in a cell phone store on the village square and set them on fire, according to witness statements and video evidence reviewed by Human Rights Watch.

Working with survivors and local activists, Human Rights Watch compiled a list of 167 names of people who were killed on that day (see Annex 1). Based on the witness statements and the video evidence reviewed, the overwhelming majority were summarily executed after the end of the military confrontations in the village, making the killings in al-Bayda one of the deadliest instances of mass executions in Syria's increasingly bloody conflict. The evidence gathered by Human Rights Watch indicates that all those executed were civilian non-combatants who posed no threat to the security forces. According to two opposition fighters who took part in the confrontations in al-Bayda, the opposition fighters either escaped to neighboring agricultural areas or were killed in the confrontations.

In documenting the killings in al-Bayda, Human Rights Watch interviewed in person four survivors who witnessed how their relatives had been separated from them by government

and pro-government forces and later found them shot. All four had fled to neighboring countries. Human Rights Watch also interviewed seven residents and four first responders who discovered the corpses after pro-government forces withdrew from the town at around 5 p.m. in the afternoon of May 2. Much of the information gathered from witnesses was corroborated by video footage filmed by the witnesses, as well as footage of government forces operating inside the village on May 2, likely filmed by some government or pro-government fighters, that was later published on YouTube.

According to multiple witnesses and footage from media outlets close to the Syrian government who were present near al-Bayda during the fighting and in the immediate aftermath, those who stormed al-Bayda were members of the regular army as well as the National Defense Forces, a paramilitary group organized by the Syrian government earlier in 2013. Three local residents also accused armed residents from neighboring pro-government villages of having participated in the killings.

Government and pro-government forces did not just kill residents: they burnt and looted a number of homes and intentionally destroyed property, according to multiple witnesses and video footage filmed by government or pro-government forces and by local residents showing burning homes and cars. According to the evidence Human Rights Watch gathered, much of the looting and burning happened on May 3, the day after the killings, when pro-government forces returned to al-Bayda.

On the same day as the clashes in al-Bayda, on May 2, fighting erupted in nearby Ras al-Nabe`, a Baniyas neighborhood approximately ten kilometers from al-Bayda. According to five local residents, government troops shelled the neighborhood on May 2 and entered the neighborhood the next day. In a pattern closely resembling events in al-Bayda, witnesses told Human Rights Watch that government forces executed a number of residents after storming the neighborhood and set certain homes on fire.

Human Rights Watch has identified 30 men, 22 women, and 29 children who were killed in Ras al-Nabe` on May 3 and in the early hours of May 4. The Syrian Network for Human Rights, a Syrian monitoring group has identified 188 civilians, including 54 children and 43 women whom government forces or pro-government militias allegedly summarily executed in Ras al-Nabe` during this period. All five local witnesses told Human Rights Watch that

they saw, or saw evidence of, government forces burning homes and in some cases saw burnt corpses in Ras al-Nabê`.

The killings, lootings, and burnings in al-Bayda and Baniyas further escalated sectarian tensions in Syria. Al-Bayda is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Muslims with a small Christian minority. Together with certain neighborhoods in Baniyas, notably Ras al-Nabê`, the area is considered a Sunni antigovernment enclave within the largely Alawite and pro-government Tartous governorate. According to local witnesses, government and pro-government forces only killed Sunnis and burned Sunni homes. Two Christian residents of al-Bayda told Human Rights Watch that pro-government forces did not commit any killings or looting in their part of town. The attacks drove most of the Sunni population of al-Bayda and of Ras al-Nabê` in Baniyas to flee after the attack. Some are currently displaced in opposition-controlled areas in northern Syria while others sought shelter in neighboring countries. One survivor currently in Turkey told Human Rights Watch that she could not imagine ever going back to al-Bayda: "I lost everything. My husband, two of my children. My house. There is no one left."

The scale of the killings and torching of homes and property a day after the fighting ended suggests that the government attacks may have been intended to displace a civilian population that was perceived as supportive of the opposition from an area that a government minister characterized as "very sensitive." Many consider it to be in the heartland of the Alawite region.

Syria's government acknowledged that it conducted military operations in al-Bayda and Baniyas, but said that its forces had responded to rebel ambushes and killed only "terrorists." Commenting on the killings in al-Bayda and Baniyas, Ali Haidar, minister of state for national reconciliation affairs, told the *Wall Street Journal* that "mistakes" may have been made and that a government committee is investigating.

International human rights law unequivocally prohibits summary and extrajudicial executions. In situations of armed conflict in which international humanitarian law applies, deliberately killing civilians and injured, surrendered, or captured soldiers (those hors de combat) would constitute a war crime.

Human Rights Watch has previously documented and condemned summary and extrajudicial executions by government and pro-government forces following ground operations in many parts of Syria, including in Daraya, a suburb of Damascus, and Homs and Idlib governorates. Human Rights Watch has also documented and condemned executions carried out by opposition fighters in areas under their control in Homs and Aleppo governorates.

Human Rights Watch called on the UN Security Council to ensure accountability for these crimes by referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and by demanding that Syria cooperate fully with the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, by giving it unrestricted access to al-Bayda and Baniyas. Human Rights Watch also urged the Syrian government to make public any findings by the government committee that Minister Ali Haidar said was formed to investigate the killings in al-Bayda and Baniyas and to grant full access to the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry as well as human rights groups.

Recommendations

To the UN Security Council

- Demand that Syria immediately and unconditionally end the widespread human rights abuses committed by government and pro-government forces, including summary and extrajudicial executions of civilians and captured opposition fighters;
- Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC);
- Adopt targeted sanctions on officials both in the Syrian government and in the National Defense Forces shown to be implicated in the most serious abuses;
- Require states to suspend all military sales and assistance, including technical training and services, to the Syrian government, given the real risk that the weapons and technology will be used in the commission of serious human rights violations;
- Demand that Syria cooperate fully with the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, including by giving it unrestricted access to al-Bayda and Baniyas;
- Demand access for independent human rights organizations.

To the Syrian Government

- Immediately stop summary and extrajudicial executions by the security forces and pro-government militias;
- Provide immediate and unhindered access and cooperation to human rights monitors, including the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry on Syria;
- Conduct prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations into allegations of summary and extrajudicial executions, including the ones described in this report, make public the findings of these investigations and bring the perpetrators to justice in proceedings that meet international fair trial standards;
- Suspend members of the security forces against whom there are credible allegations of human rights abuses, pending independent investigations.

To All Countries

- Acting individually or jointly through regional mechanisms where appropriate, adopt targeted sanctions against Syrian officials credibly implicated in the ongoing serious violations of international human rights law in al-Bayda and Baniyas;
- Under the principle of universal jurisdiction and in accordance with national laws, investigate and prosecute members of the Syrian military and civilian leadership suspected of committing, being complicit in or having command responsibility for international crimes in al-Bayda and Baniyas;
- Call for UN Security Council referral of Syria to the ICC as the forum most capable of effectively investigating and prosecuting those bearing the greatest responsibility for abuses in Syria.

Methodology

Documenting human rights abuses on the ground in Syria is dangerous and difficult in both government and opposition held territory. Since the start of the war in Syria Human Rights Watch has been unable to gain access to government held areas. We have travelled in opposition held areas in the governorates of Latakia, Idlib, Aleppo, and Raqqa in the past two years.

This report is not based on site visits because the areas where the abuses documented in this report took place are under government control and inaccessible to Human Rights Watch. The report is based on information collected through interviews in Turkey or Lebanon and through interviews conducted by telephone or on Skype with witnesses inside Syria.

Human Rights Watch interviewed 15 people from al-Bayda and five from Baniyas, between May and July 2013. Ten interviews with witnesses from al-Bayda and five from Baniyas were conducted in person in neighboring countries after they left Syria. The remaining five interviews were conducted on the telephone or through Skype. When possible we provided a map of al-Bayda and Baniyas to interviewees and asked them to identify the exact location of the killings they witnessed.

In al-Bayda, Human Rights Watch reconstructed the executions that took place on that day based primarily on testimonies from four witnesses living in Turkey who witnessed how the government and pro-government forces took their relatives and saw or heard them execute them. In cases where all the members of a family were shot dead leaving no witnesses to the killings, Human Rights Watch gathered information from the residents and first responders who discovered the corpses after the pro-government forces withdrew from the town.

In the case of killings in Ras al-Nabe^h, four witnesses living in Lebanon provided much of the evidence. The witnesses, who were present in the neighborhood but were not direct witnesses to the killings, told Human Rights Watch they believed government and pro-government forces were responsible for the killings and that the corpses they saw appeared to have been executed. They said the victims were either shot in the chest or head or had multiple gunshot wounds on several areas on their bodies.

Human Rights Watch believes the witnesses are credible including because of the level of detail with which they described what they observed and because of the significant corroboration of facts in the statements with video footage filmed by the witnesses, as well as footage of government forces operating inside al-Bayda and Baniyas, likely filmed by some government or pro-government fighters, that was later published on YouTube.

All interviews were conducted in Arabic by Arabic-speaking researchers. Human Rights Watch explained the purpose of the interviews to interviewees and obtained their consent to use the information they provided in this report. However, all interviewees asked us not to use their real names because of fears for their safety or the safety of family members who remain in Syria. We have therefore withheld the real names of all witnesses and instead used pseudonyms.

Human Rights Watch also reviewed more than 10 videos posted on YouTube by activists and local residents from al-Bayda filmed in the immediate aftermath of the killings. In three instances, we identified and interviewed the individuals responsible for filming the videos. We showed the video footage to a number of residents of al-Bayda and asked them to confirm the location filmed and identify the victims appearing in the footage. We also reviewed footage filmed by media outlets close to the Syrian government who were present in or near al-Bayda and Baniyas during the fighting and in the immediate aftermath.

I. Background: Al-Bayda and Baniyas

Al-Bayda is a village of approximately 7,000 residents near the coastal city of Baniyas, in Syria's Tartous governorate. Al-Bayda's residents are predominantly Sunni Muslims, with a small Christian minority. Together with certain neighborhoods in Baniyas, the area is considered a Sunni anti-government enclave amidst the largely Alawite and pro-government Tartous governorate.¹

Al-Bayda and Baniyas were amongst the earliest towns to join anti-government protests in Syria in March 2011 and some of the opposition activists who gained notoriety early in the Syrian uprising, such as Anas al-Shughari and Ahmad Bayasi, hailed from al-Bayda.² On April 12, 2011, security forces entered al-Bayda, rounded up many of its residents in the main village square and proceeded to hit and kick them. The beatings in the village square were caught on camera and the footage quickly gained widespread attention as it aired on regional and international TV outlets.³

On May 6, 2011, the Syrian army launched an offensive to regain full control of Baniyas, which had witnessed protests as well as violent clashes between security forces and protesters in April.⁴ Syrian troops backed by tanks swept into Baniyas and arrested dozens of protesters.⁵

¹ According to the Syria Central Bureau of Statistics, Baniyas had a population of 96,550 in the 2004 census. <http://www.cbssyr.sy/General%20census/census%202004/pop-man.pdf> (accessed August 11, 2013).

² The first protest in Baniyas dates back to March 18, 2011 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC55uPBKYqU> (accessed August 12, 2013). Anas al-Shughari is a 23-year-old student at Tishreen University in the coastal city of Latakia. Originally from al-Bayda, he played a leading role in initiating and organizing protests in coastal Syria and reporting on human rights violations to the media. Security forces arrested him on May 15, 2011 near Banyas. He remains in incommunicado detention since then and his fate is unknown. Ahmad Bayasi a 22-year old resident of al-Bayda was one of the men that security forces rounded up and beat in the main village square of al-Bayda in April 2011. He gained notoriety after publically challenging the official narrative by the government that no beatings had taken place in al-Bayda by filming himself with his identification papers in the main village square. "Syrian Beaten on Camera Appears on State Television," The New York Times, May 24, 2011 <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/24/syrian-abused-by-security-forces-appears-on-state-television/> (accessed August 11, 2013).

³ The video of the crackdown in al-Bayda in April 2011 can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=sjZ-kLjeUE (accessed August 11, 2013).

⁴ "Syria unrest: Shooting erupts in seaport of Baniyas," BBC News, April 10, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13029631> (accessed August 11, 2013).

⁵ "Syrian tanks enter 'protest hub' Baniyas," Aljazeera English, May 7, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/05/20115765059910917.html> (accessed August 11, 2013).

Following the heavy security crackdown and the arrest of key activists, protests in Baniyas and al-Bayda came to a halt. Security forces set up a number of checkpoints at the entrance of Baniyas and along the road from Baniyas to al-Bayda. While al-Bayda had no permanent presence of security forces inside the village, security forces did send in regular patrols. According to Mohammad, an anti-government activist from al-Bayda who later became an opposition fighter:

The invasion of Baniyas by government forces put a stop to demonstrations there. It became very normal to see security forces everywhere including in al-Bayda. They would come on motorbikes or in cars make a tour of the place and leave. If they wanted to arrest someone they did that. If they wanted to kill someone they did that. If they wanted to steal something they would do this too. So this was the general atmosphere. We were powerless. They always came in and did as they pleased. They beat people, abused them and killed them and they did this in any neighborhood they fancied and to any family they chose to do it to. No one was able to say ‘No.’ So the area was totally under their control.⁶

While security forces’ tight control over the area as well as its geographical isolation from other opposition strongholds reduced opposition activities in Baniyas and al-Bayda, Mohammad and Majed, a local opposition activist, told Human Rights Watch that they continued to help defecting soldiers escape from the coastal areas by providing local shelter and safe escape routes through the area’s agricultural and forested land.⁷

In early 2013, opposition fighters staged some sporadic “hit and run” attacks against government forces around Baniyas.⁸ In March 2013, an armed opposition group calling itself the “Nasr al-Islam Brigades” announced its formation in Baniyas.⁹ Mohammad told Human Rights Watch he was a member of the group but said that when government forces

⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁷ Human Rights Watch interviews with Mohammad and Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey..

⁸ See for example, footage uploaded in March 2013 of an attempted IED attack on driving military vehicle on highway near Baniyas <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaGDAFtFkus&list=UUw8zfN6ofklfgzprRSunoQ> (accessed August 12, 2013).

⁹ Formation video can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=AaGDAFtFkus (accessed August 12, 2013).

launched their attack on al-Bayda on May 2, 2013, the group had yet to take part in any direct confrontations with government forces:

This brigade has been formed and I am part of it but it hasn't fought any battles, maybe one day. Currently, neither the Nasr al-Islam nor Jabhat al-Nusra, if they were there, none of them had the ability to fight battles in the coastal areas.¹⁰

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

II. Killings in al-Bayda

The Trigger: Security Raid Ambushed, Firefight Erupts

At around 7 a.m. on May 2, 2013 a convoy from Syria's security forces made its way to al-Bayda, according to multiple witnesses in the village.¹¹ Majed said that the convoy consisted of at least three pickup trucks, one of them armed with a heavy machine gun, and two buses carrying security forces. Another witness, Mohammad, a local fighter said he saw two pickup trucks and a bus pass by his house.

According to Mohammad who had been tasked with scouting the movement of the convoy, they first stopped at two houses in Wata al-Bayda, the agricultural area of the village, and then proceeded to the village proper.¹² According to three residents, Majed, Lina, and Louai, the convoy made its way to a group of houses in a neighborhood locally known as Bayt Khalil, down the hill from the elementary school.¹³

News outlets close to the Syrian government later reported that security forces had gone to al-Bayda to search for weapons and fighters.¹⁴ According to Mohammad, Majed, and Lama, a relative of Hassan Othman, the security forces were likely acting on information obtained following the arrest two days earlier, on April 30, of Hassan Othman, known on social networks as the "eagle of al-Bayda."¹⁵ According to the witnesses, Othman was a key opposition figure in al-Bayda, responsible for organizing logistics for defectors trying to escape from military service in the coastal areas.¹⁶ As one local resident, Omar put it: "Othman knew the place of most of the wanted men in the village."¹⁷ According to

¹¹ Human Rights Watch interviews with Mohammad and Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey; Human Rights Watch interview with Omar, July 5, 2013, Lebanon.

¹² Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

¹³ Human Rights Watch interviews with Majed., Lina, and Louai, June 27-28, 2013, Turkey.

¹⁴ See for example, news report by SAMA TV, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFIVTt5cBHE> (accessed August 11, 2013).

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch interviewed relatives of Hassan Othman who witnessed his detention on April 30, 2013 as well as activists from al-Bayda who confirmed Hassan's role. Human Rights Watch interviews with Lama, Majed, Mohammad, June 27-28, 2013, Turkey. Human Rights Watch interview with Omar, July 5, 2013, Lebanon.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Omar, July 5, 2013, Lebanon.

Mohammad, who said he saw the security convoy inside al-Bayda, the security forces had brought Othman with them on their search operation:

One of the neighbors later told me that he saw the security forces take Othman out of one of the cars to force him to lead them to the houses where the defectors were hiding. One of the residents saw him. He was handcuffed. There was a group of three defectors in a neighboring house. They fought back.¹⁸

According to Ola, a neighborhood resident, as well as Mohammad, an armed local fighter who was assisting the defectors, a firefight erupted near the house where the defectors were.¹⁹ According to Mohammad, they deployed at three entrances of the town to prevent or slow down government reinforcements from coming:

The defectors called on us to help them. We were not going to just let them die. These are defecting soldiers. Their safety is our responsibility. We knew that the security forces would also call for reinforcements so we deployed at the entrances of the village. We put four people on the road to Mawrad, ten on the road to Mrah, We were unable to close the road of Jraysiyeh. Our plan was to slow any reinforcements to allow the defectors to escape.²⁰

An armed opposition group calling itself “Kataeb Nasr al-Islam” posted on its Facebook page at 10:20 a.m. that day that they had “fought against a convoy of four cars coming to arrest defectors.” Security forces had sent reinforcements from Tartous, the group claimed, and the rebels opened fire on them as they approached al-Bayda.²¹

Pro-government troops quickly surrounded the town, according to local residents and opposition fighters as well as pro-government media outlets. Mohammad and Majed told

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

¹⁹ One resident in the neighborhood told Human rights Watch, that he heard a strong firefight right next to their house. Human Rights Watch interview with Ola, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

²¹ The post was subsequently deleted from the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/katayeb.nasr.al.islam?fref=ts>) but Human Rights Watch has a copy on file.

Human Rights Watch that government forces shelled the town from the fortress near Marqab, from a location near the coastal highway at al-Qurayr where a battalion was deployed, and from Jayssiye, a neighboring village.²² According to Mohammad, the shelling hit mostly wooded and agricultural areas around the village. He said that the shelling killed three of the opposition fighters but no civilians.²³

Online news sites close to the Syrian government also reported clashes on May 2. “Syria Street”, for example, quoted a military source saying that gunmen ambushed government forces in al-Bayda during a search operation following information about an arms depot, killing 6 soldiers and wounding 23.²⁴ Pro-government journalists who went to the hills surrounding al-Bayda a few hours after the firefight interviewed fighters on the outskirts of al-Bayda who indicated that “the army and National Defense” were in the process of controlling the situation.²⁵ In an interview that aired on May 3, a government soldier told al-Manar, the television station of the pro-Assad Lebanese movement Hezbollah that pro-government forces had moved in on al-Bayda from three approaches. The government never officially reported on the final death toll of its combatants. But the *Wall Street Journal* reported on July 30 that local officials told its correspondent that nine soldiers were killed in the fighting in al-Bayda on May 2.²⁶

According to Mohammad, the fighting was over by 1 p.m. and local fighters retreated to nearby forests:

At 1 p.m. the three [defecting] soldiers slipped away and we withdrew too. We escaped to the wooded areas and hid in caves. ... From there, every now and then we would hear gunfire. We didn’t know why they were shooting.

²² Human Rights Watch interview with Majed and Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

²³ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

²⁴ “High Ranking Military Source to “Syria Street”: This is how we will respond to any armed rebellion in safe areas,” Syria Street, May 2, 2013 <http://sy-street.net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D9%8A%D8%B7%D9%88%D9%91%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3.html> (accessed July 31, 2013) .

²⁵ News report from SAMA TV , May 2, 2013 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFIVTt5cBHE> (accessed July 31, 2013).

²⁶ Sam Dagher, “In Syria, Signs of Civilian Massacre,” Wall Street Journal, July 30, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324354704578637923366819536.html>(accessed August 11, 2013).

All the armed men were gone. The gunfire lasted from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. At about 3 p.m., someone came to tell me that he heard my uncle was killed.²⁷

Five local residents interviewed by Human Rights Watch confirmed that the sound of gunfire quieted down by around 1 p.m. Footage filmed by a pro-government media outlet accompanying government fighters on the hills surrounding al-Bayda showed government soldiers moving inside the village under the midday sun.²⁸

Tense Waiting for the Local Population

Al-Bayda's residents woke up on May 2 to the sound of heavy gunfire in the village. The exchange of gunfire and later the shells falling on the village kept them inside their homes or forced them to seek shelter in their neighbors' basements. Ola, 38, lived near the house where the initial clashes erupted between the security forces and the defectors:

We woke up to the sound of fighting. We could see from our house soldiers nearby and an officer who seemed to be giving orders. This happened at 7 a.m. The fighting went on from 7 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.²⁹

Lama, who lived near the Thuraya mosque, often referred to as the new mosque, told Human Rights Watch:

I was drinking coffee with my husband. Suddenly we heard a loud explosion. My husband, who was a retired army soldier, told me it was just a sound bomb. The explosion made me drop the coffee cup. Then we heard heavy gunfire. I sent the kids downstairs to their grandparents as they would be safer in the basement. In our apartment, our eldest sons stayed with us.³⁰

Human Rights Watch documented no civilian casualty during the exchange of fire between the government and opposition forces that lasted between 7 a.m. until around 1 p.m.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

²⁸ News report from SAMA TV, May 2, 2013 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFIVTt5cBHE> (accessed July 31, 2013).

²⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Ola, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Lama, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

Executions in al-Bayda

Around 1 p.m., after local fighters had withdrawn, government and pro-government forces entered the town and proceeded to search the houses, according to seven witnesses who were in the village. According to the witnesses who lived in different parts of the village as well as video footage from that day, government and pro-government forces entered simultaneously from three separate directions. According to the witnesses and footage from pro-government media outlets, those who entered the village were soldiers in the regular army as well as the National Defense Forces (for more details on the perpetrators, see Section V below).

Over the next three hours, numerous witnesses have described how again and again government and pro-government forces entered homes, separated men from women and young children, rounded up the men of each neighborhood in one spot, and executed them by shooting them at close range. According to the witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch, none of those executed were armed or had taken part in the fighting earlier that day. In many cases, the pro-government forces burnt the bodies of those they had just shot.

Human Rights Watch spoke to four survivors who witnessed how the government and pro-government forces took their relatives and saw or heard the gunmen shoot them. In at least two cases documented by Human Rights Watch, all the members of a family were shot dead leaving no witnesses to these apparently cold-blooded executions. In such cases, Human Rights Watch gathered information about the execution from the residents and first responders who discovered the corpses after the pro-government forces withdrew from the town at around 5 p.m. in the afternoon.

Execution of Members of Suweid Family and Neighbors

The first houses at the western entrance of al-Bayda belonged to the Suweid family. Mustafa Suweid (locally referred to as the “Lubnani” (the Lebanese, because he had lived for a long time in Lebanon), approximately 70 years old, lived there with his four adult sons (Ahmad, Othman, Muhammad and Sa`id) and their families. Samira, the wife of one of the sons, described the events in the morning:

At 7 a.m. we woke to the sound of gunfire. My husband was getting dressed to go to work. I told him to stay. The sound of gunfire got closer. My

husband proposed we drive down to the coast. But shells started falling. One shell fell near the house. So we decided to stay put. The shelling eased around 10 a.m. At around 2 p.m. we saw around 50 soldiers approach the house. They were standing under a tree. They first went to the neighbor's home. But it was empty. They then came to our house. They had patches on their shoulders with the inscription "Special Forces."³¹



Photo of Sa'id Suweid. © Private

Samira said that the soldiers immediately separated the men from the women, children and elderly, and locked the women, seven children, and 70-year old Mustafa Suweid in the apartment of one of the four brothers. The pro-government forces then took the four brothers as well as Mustafa Shaaban, a neighbor who had sought shelter with the Suweid family, to the next-door apartment of another brother. According to Samira:



Photo of Ahmad Suweid. © Private

Suddenly we heard gunshots. I started screaming to my father-in-law, 'The men are gone, Abu Mohammad, the men.' I ran to the window and saw around 20 soldiers leave the apartment next door. As soon as they left, we broke out of the apartment where they had left us and rushed to the apartment where they had taken the men.

³¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Samira, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

I first saw my husband's body by the door. Then I found Sa'id's body in the hallway. The remaining three were in a room on top of each other. Each of the men had three bullets in him. Ahmad was not yet dead. But we were unable to get him to a hospital. He died two hours later. We moved the bodies into one room and covered them. The blood slowly seeped onto the carpet.³²

According to Samira, the pro-government fighters then headed to the neighboring house of Zakaria Hussein, a man in his mid-20s. Samira heard gunshots from Hussein's house. She remained hidden in her house for two hours until she was sure the government and pro-government forces had left and made her way to check on her neighbors. She found the bodies of Zakaria and his wife, Manar Bayasi, who both had been shot. In the next house, she found the bodies of Mustafa Qaddour, 35, and Karam Suweid, 30. "There were seven houses in our neighborhood. They killed seven men," Samira told Human Rights Watch.³³

The women in the Suweid family, terrified, initially stayed in their house. Later in the afternoon, the brother of Zakaria's wife, Manar Bayasi, and some other young men from the village, who had escaped to the nearby forests, came to check on them. They helped them wrap up the corpses and escape to the neighboring village of Mrah, Samira said. However, the elderly father of the four brothers decided to stay in the village. One of the young men who assisted the Suweid family, Mohammad, told Human Rights Watch:

The first house we got to is the Lubnani's house. This was the first house we entered. We were surprised then. We found that four of his children were killed. They killed his four children but left him alive. He is an old man. They killed all his children and told him that they were going to keep him alive so that he suffers. He told us what they said. In the house next door, we found Zakaria Hussein, he was a newlywed, married only 15 days. He was killed together with his wife Manar Bayasi. The third house was that of Mustafa Qaddour, nicknamed Hafez. Fancy that! Hafez! Mustafa Qaddour was killed and Karam Suweid was next to him. We had only just returned to the village and already saw so many people killed.³⁴

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

The surviving members of the Suweid family shared photos they had taken with their cellphones of the executed men.

Execution of Members of Bayasi Family and Neighbors

Up the hill from the Suweid family is a cluster of homes inhabited by the Bayasi family. There are several branches of the Bayasi family in al-Bayda and locals commonly referred to this one as the Fattouh family to distinguish it from the other Bayasi branches.

According to three local residents who found their bodies after the pro-government forces had left the village, all the family members who were present in their homes on May 2—at least 9 men, 3 women, and 14 children—were executed with the exception of a three-year old girl who they said was wounded by three bullets but survived. Human Rights Watch was unable to locate the girl or confirm her survival. The information below about the death of the Bayasi family is based on the three residents' statements as well as video footage they took of the corpses.

Those who found the bodies told Human Rights Watch that the corpses of the men of the family were found on a steep street that leads to the Thuraya mosque, commonly known as Tal`et Abboud, about 150 meters from the family's cluster of homes. The bodies of the women and children were found in one of the rooms of the house of Mustafa Bayasi, also known as Abu Ali Mustafa.

The three witnesses – one woman and two men – who saw the bodies shortly after the massacre told Human Rights Watch what they saw. One of the first to arrive after the withdrawal of pro-government fighters, Mohammad described the scene:

Just as you start going up the hill [from the main square], the first 15 meters up, there were dead bodies all over. They were the bodies of young men, more than 30 bodies. I looked at them and examined them carefully. All of them were shot either in the head or in the eye. They were executed at close range.³⁵

³⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

Another man who arrived at the scene shortly afterwards, Majed said:

There were about 35 bodies. They all looked like they had been shot from a short distance. Some had a bullet to the head others to the neck. One, Ahmad Ibrahim al-Shughari, was shot in the eye. One of the men who was still alive was Ali Bayasi. We tried to help him but it was too late.³⁶

Footage filmed by Mohammad and Majed that afternoon shows at least a dozen bodies lying on the ground on the road that local residents confirmed is the one they refer to as Tal`et Abboud.³⁷



Screenshot from footage filmed on the afternoon of May 2 of Tal`et Abboud.³⁸

The residents of al-Bayda were unable to move the bodies of the men that first night. The next day, on May 3, reporters of the government-aligned al-Akhbariya TV station entered al-

³⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

³⁷ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igtLF7Hw8eQ> (accessed on July 31, 2013).

³⁸ Ibid.

Bayda and filmed the bodies of the Bayasi family. When the TV station aired the film the same day it referred to the victims as “terrorists.”

Blood traces on the available video footage suggest that the men had been executed near the location where they were found.



Screenshot from footage that was filmed and broadcast on May 3 by the Syrian pro-government TV station al-Akhbariya shows the bodies of members of the Bayasi family³⁹

The women and children of the family were found inside the house of Mustafa Bayasi. Mohammad and Majed, the two men who found and filmed the men also visited the house and filmed inside shortly after the departure of the government and pro-government forces. Majed, who was in the first group to find the bodies, told Human Rights Watch:

I was busy helping the surviving residents leave the town when the fiancé of one of the Bayasi women asked me to go with him to check on her. We went to the house of Mustafa Ali Bayasi. We entered. We saw no one in the first room. As we entered further into the house, we got to a room where we found so many corpses. Mothers and children piled on top of each other.

³⁹ Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAxDuiMDGoA> (accessed July 31, 2013).

One mother was still covering her son. I thought he may have survived but as I turned her over, I saw that he had been also shot. My friend's fiancé was also killed. We closed the windows of the house because we did not want any wild animals to come in.⁴⁰

A few hours later, Mohammad and another man from al-Bayda entered the house. They had sought shelter in the surrounding mountains during the fighting and had returned to the village after the government forces had departed to check on survivors. Mohammad, who had also seen the bodies of the executed men in the family, told Human Rights Watch:

When we arrived at this [Mustafa Bayasi's] house it was already 10 p.m. By then we had been touring the different neighborhoods for the past three hours. We walked through narrow streets and looked everywhere. In every corner we looked we would see 7 or 10 dead bodies. We were touring the homes in order to get a picture of how many people died in this massacre. We were counting them. So we arrived to this house after we had looked in many other homes. They were all completely empty. We didn't know why...

The door was wide open and you could see the signs of destruction. We entered the house and went towards one of the rooms. This room wasn't near the entrance. It was a little bit further inside the house. What we saw there was totally awful. We entered the room and saw more than 25 dead bodies, all women and children. Not one single man. Some were children. They were aged between 3 months to 70 years. They were killed with bullets. Some had been shot in the head, some in the stomach. It is like they [the perpetrators] had fired around chaotically. They probably put them in one room and then sprayed them with bullets. They were on top of each and the blood was seeping from underneath them all.

There was someone with me when we went in. His head started spinning from the smell of blood. It was very strong because the windows in this

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Majed, July 28, 2013, Turkey.

house were all closed. It was night and, honestly, the smell was so strong. It was enough to make anyone faint.

They were all dead. One woman was holding her child. He was probably three months old. Quite a few of the women were holding their children. They were all on top of each other. They all died together.⁴¹

They filmed the scene of the killing with their cell phones.⁴²



Screenshot from footage taken on May 2 shows the interior of the room where the bodies of executed women and children were found by first-responders.⁴³

From statements, Human Rights Watch was able to confirm the names of nine of the executed men, three women, and 14 children of the Bayasi family:

- Mustafa Ali Bayasi and his wife Aisha Abd al-Qader Bayasi
- Mohammad Ali Bayasi (brother of Mustafa)

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, July 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁴² Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdqokzPtVl4> (accessed July 31, 2013).

⁴³ Ibid.

- Abdallah Mohammad Bayasi (known as Abed Fattouh), his wife Aisha Hussein, and their five daughters (Nasiba, Rania, Samia, Ahlam, Wala')
- Ahmad Mohammad Bayasi, 28, and his son Mohammad
- Mohammad Abdallah Bayasi (nicknamed Abu al-Abed), his wife Saffa, his son Abdallah, and his five children Aisha, Sara, Shahida, Halima, Hamza
- Youssef Mohammad Bayasi, his sons Mustafa and Muhammad
- 4 children of Abd al-Mon'em Bayasi: Amneh, 6, Aiman, 5, Afnan, 3, Muaz, 1.

Execution of Members of al-Shughari Family and Neighbors

The al-Shughari neighborhood of al-Bayda (named after the family name of most of the neighborhood's residents), near the Thuraya mosque, is about 300 meters away from the houses of the Bayasi family. "If I stand at my window, I could waive to the wife of Mustafa Bayasi," one resident, Lama, told Human Rights Watch.⁴⁴

According to Lama and another local resident, they had remained sheltered in their homes after the shelling and fighting of the morning. Lama told Human Rights Watch that by midday she saw security men come out of the Bayasi family houses:

From the windows, I saw two men come out of Aisha's house [wife of Mustafa Bayasi] wearing green military uniforms. They made their way to the Oqba building [a building along the road]. They went up the building inspecting and firing bullets. They were looking at the area with all the trees and bushes. I told my husband: "They are coming. We need to hide our children." But my husband replied that I should not worry because we have not done anything wrong.

A quarter of an hour or half an hour later they started making their way to our house. At this point my in-laws, who lived around us, decided to each go back to their homes. They were scared. They were still going up the stairs when one of the soldiers started shouting, "Put down your guns."

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Lama, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

I wanted to talk to them myself. Sometimes they treat women a bit differently. So I stood up to speak to them. I said, “Son, we do not have weapons here.” He said, “You, whore, you dare to speak!” At this point my husband stood up and said, ‘Why are you speaking like this? We don’t have guns. We are peaceful. I am like you. I am a retired army man. Syria, like it is dear to you, it is dear to me. You shouldn’t abuse us in this way.’”

At this moment, he hit my husband on his back with the butt of his rifle. It had some kind of a spear. My husband started bleeding immediately. My oldest son tried to protest the treatment, but the gunman said: “You are still talking?” And he shot him in the shoulder, between the neck and the shoulder.⁴⁵

According to Lama, the security forces also shot two of her nephews, aged 14 and 17, one in the leg and the other near the hip, before dragging them, her husband and two sons down the staircase and out of the house:

They were about 20 or 22 [pro-government] people with guns on the street, all spread between Abdallah Saqer’s house and the house of Umm Abd al-Salam. All the men were either in fatigues or army uniforms.

At this stage, Lama recalled, pro-government forces separated the women from the men:

They put us [women] in Umm Abd al-Salam’s house. While the men, some young, others old, were gathered along one of the neighborhood’s main street.

From the house of Abdallah Saqer to the house of Umm Abd al-Salam, all the way, there were young men in the prime of life and also old men, some shot in the leg, some in the stomach, some in the arms. They were all people I knew, one was my cousin, some were my nephews.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Four or five of the gunmen had meat cleavers with them and were walking between the men striking them [with the cleavers]. Each group of men came separately until they were all gathered.

According to Lama, some of the men had bullet wounds while others had been hit with cleavers or stabbed with knives. They were bleeding but most were still alive, she said. Lama moved closer to the door of Umm Abd al-Salam's house to see what was happening:

I sneaked outside. I couldn't bear it because my sons and their father were outside. My nephews and my cousins, they were all there. I couldn't stay put. All the men were screaming. They were saying, "We haven't done anything." Little boys were screaming for their mothers. The son of [Hind al-Shughari], Abd al-Khaleq, he was 13. Then Sawsan's son, Luqman al-Hiris he was 14, and Ahmad and Mamdouh, they were 14.... and Ahmad Othman.⁴⁶

At some point, some of the pro-government fighters took their guns and shot them, Lama said.

According to Lama, she was threatened with rape, but ultimately the soldiers did not carry out their threat:

One officer told a soldier: 'Here go. This one is for you. You deal with her. Ask her how many children she wants.' Another soldier then said, 'How many children do you want?' I said, 'I thank God I have enough.' He said, 'I am going to make you pregnant with four. The four we took.' He thought the ones he slaughtered were all the children I had. The soldier then came to me and said, 'Auntie, I am just obeying orders.' I said, 'Go ahead...you will double my honor.' He said, 'Auntie, I am going to pretend that I am doing something to you so move your arms. Make it look real. Otherwise they will shoot you and me.'⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Eventually, the government and pro-government forces left. And the women emerged from the house. They found the men, many of them their relatives, lying dead on the street or in a neighboring home that belonged to Fuad Matar, nicknamed Fuad al-Batal. According to Lama, the majority were gunned down.

Muhammad Shaker's wife immediately found her husband. He was executed, her husband and her father in law. I found my husband. He was shot in the head and in the shoulder. Half of his head from this side was all smashed up. His insides were all out. This [the injuries to his abdomen] was done with cleavers.⁴⁸

Lama found some burnt corpses on the street and was certain that one of the bodies was her son:

We found 5 young men who died while being tied up together. They had been burnt. They were nothing but charcoal. I am sure my son was one of them. Someone said, "This is not your son. These boys are shorter. Your sons are tall." I said, "It is because he was burned. He shrank." I recognized him from his hand. When he was a kid he broke it and it grew in a particular fashion. Their fingers were swollen from the burns [but I could tell his hand].⁴⁹

Lama found a relative, Ahmad Othman, further down the street near the Oqba building. Othman, a teenager, was a Barcelona soccer fan and he was wearing their jersey on that day.

Local residents took a photo of some of the burnt bodies that they discovered and shared it with Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch is not publishing these photos because of their graphic nature.

According to Lama more burnt bodies were found inside Fuad Matar's house. His house had burnt down entirely.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Survivors from the neighborhood provided Human Rights Watch with the following 17 names for members of the al-Shughari or their neighbors who were killed:

- Ibrahim Mohammad al-Shughari
- Ahmad Mohammad al- Shughari
- Mohammad Mohammad al- Shughari
- Othman Mohammad al- Shughari
- Maher al- Shughari
- Mohammad Zaher al- Shughari
- Abd al-Raziq al-Shughari
- Usama Abd al-Raziq al-Shughari
- Abd al- Rahman Abd al-Qader al-Shughari
- Abd al-Mun'em Abd al-Qader al- Shughari
- Abd al-Khaliq Ahmad al-Shughari (Grandson of Abd al- Raziq)
- Ibrahim Hamed Mustafa al-Shughari
- Ahmad Ibrahim al-Shughari
- Luqman Yusuf al-Haras
- Othman Ahmad Othman
- Ahmad Mohammad Othman
- Muhammad Hussein

Executions and Burning of Corpses in Main Square

Following a similar pattern, government and pro-government troops also searched homes around the main square of al-Bayda. In a number of cases, witnesses said, they separated the men from the women, then took the men to the main village square and executed many of them there. They then piled many of the bodies in a cell phone store on the main square owned by Azzam Bayasi and set them on fire, according to two witnesses who were taken to the square but were not executed. Video evidence viewed by Human Rights Watch corroborated this account.

Majed, who lived near the main square next the primary school, said pro-government forces took him to the square at around 3 or 3:30 p.m. He told Human Rights Watch:

The security forces entered our house at around 2 p.m. They separated us [men] from the women and forced us, around 15 males, including two 13-year old boys, to lie on the ground on the gravel under the sun. They proceeded to search the 6 or 7 homes of our neighborhood but found no weapons. At around 3 or 3:30 p.m., the security forces took us to the square.⁵⁰

Majed described what he saw when he got to the square:

There were stores burning and corpses lying on the ground. They made us stop in front of Azzam's cell phone shop. The shop had not yet been burned. I saw through one of the windows corpses piled on top of each other. I heard one gunman tell the other to spray the bodies, and another said wait.⁵¹

Video footage strongly corroborates the allegations of Majed. Some pro-government TV crews filmed the main square of al-Bayda on the afternoon of May 2. For example, the official satellite channel (*al-Fada'iyya al-Suriya*) aired footage in its nightly newscast on May 2 from al-Bayda that shows bodies of men lying on the ground of the main square. The men had their shirts lifted over their heads, a practice that residents said security forces used to prevent those detained from seeing. The pool of blood next to their heads strongly suggests that they died from bullets to the head. The TV newscaster commented on the image by stating that the "army had killed a number of terrorists" in al-Bayda.⁵²

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Footage on file with Human Rights Watch.



Screenshot from footage from the Syrian government's official satellite channel that aired in its nightly newscast on May 2 from al-Bayda shows bodies of men lying on the ground of the main square.⁵³

Al-Manar, the TV channel of the pro-Assad Lebanese movement Hezbollah broadcast from Beirut, also aired footage from the village square of al-Bayda on May 2 that clearly shows corpses lying in the main village square with their shirts turned over their heads.

⁵³ Ibid.



Screenshot from footage from al-Manar TV channel that aired on May 2 shows corpses lying in the main village square of al-Bayda.⁵⁴

Local activists also shared with Human Rights Watch video footage that shows government or pro-government forces piling up bodies inside a shop that local residents identified as the Azzam cell phone shop. The footage was likely filmed by pro-government forces and eventually obtained by someone who posted it on YouTube.⁵⁵ The footage shows men in military outfits dragging bodies to the shop. Blood traces at the entrance of the shop indicate that the bodies had been dragged there. There are three bodies just outside the shop and at least 25 inside. Many had a bloodstain on their clothes indicating where they had been shot.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fh_Z1RmKHw (accessed July 31, 2013).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tYK8AAW1sY (accessed July 31, 2013).



Screenshot from footage taken in a cell phone shop that shows the corpses of men lined up inside.⁵⁷

Majed told Human Rights Watch that he was saved when a car suddenly came to the square. It had “National Defense Army” written on it, he said. A man stepped out of the car and seemed to be an officer by the way the other gunmen reacted to his presence. The man called on one of the gunmen to bring him the group of detained men that the witness was part of:

He asked us our names. It was almost as if he knew who we were and someone had called to spare us. He ordered the men to allow us to go. He put us in a house to protect us and posted two guards. He said, “When you see people have left the square, you go back home.” This is what we did.

At 4:30 p.m., I noticed that everyone had left. I told the group that we can exit the house where we had sheltered. As soon as I made it out of the house, I heard a bullet shot. There were still snipers. I walked by Azzam’s cell phone shop. It was on fire. They must have burnt the bodies between 3 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. We tried to put out the fire. The bodies were completely burnt. I was able to identify a few of them who were closer to the door.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Muhammad Youssef Taha and Yasir Taha. There must have been around 45 corpses in the shop. While I was in the shop a car from the Civil Defense drove by. I hid. They looked from outside, and said, 'They are burnt.' They found a couple of bodies in the square. They left them and drove away.⁵⁸

Government or pro-government forces also took a group of women to the village square, according to two female witnesses. Ola, a resident who lived around 200 meters from the square, said that government forces made her and her relatives walk to the main square at around 3:30 p.m. She described what she saw:

When we reached the square, there was a very strong smell of corpses. We could also see stores burning. The supermarket of Muhammad Taha was burning. There was also a fire inside the cell phone shop of Azzam Bayasi. The corpse of Yasir Taha was lying next to the front door of the shop of Azzam Bayasi. I was very scared.⁵⁹

Ola and the group she was with were saved when an officer showed up and told the gunmen to take the women and the children back to their homes, she said. On their way back, Ola said, she saw the house of her neighbor burning. She said the gunmen wanted to take pictures with the women of al-Bayda and were repeating, "We burned Daraa, we will burn al-Bayda."

Around 6 p.m., after the government and pro-government forces had left, some of the al-Bayda men who had hid in nearby hills returned to the village. Mohammad described what he found as he reached the village square:

There was the body of Yasir Hussein outside the shop of the barber Muhammad Hussein, known as Muhammad al-Shaweesh. He was lying at the door of the shop. He was shot in the eye. A part of his head was all gone. It was all just meat and blood. Next to his shop was Azzam's shop, Azzam al-Bayasi. What we saw inside it I cannot describe. It was an incredible site.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Ola, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

The room was 4 meters by 4 meters. There were more than 60 dead bodies there. They were all next to each other and all burnt. The smoke was still coming out of them. The fire had subsided but was still smoking. The bodies were mutilated. We couldn't tell whether they were shot first or just burnt. I tried to have a closer look to see if any of them was shot. I turned one of the burnt bodies and I felt my hands covered with fat. The body had melted.

There were about 60 bodies but we couldn't count them accurately. It was not possible. They were all burnt and on top of each other. It was an incredibly awful site. In the square outside there was a lot of blood. This is why I am thinking that they probably killed them first and then took them inside and set their bodies on fire.

As to the dead bodies it was impossible to tell who they were. You couldn't recognize any of their features. We found the body of `Ala' Ahmad Hussein, 25, near Azzam's shop, at the beginning of the street that goes downhill from the square. His body had been dragged on the road.⁶⁰

Mohammad and his friends filmed the scene inside the shop and posted it on YouTube. Human Rights Watch has reviewed the footage which shows burnt and still smoldering bodies.⁶¹

Allegations of Transfer and Execution in Neighboring Villages

Two al-Bayda residents told Human Rights Watch that they believed that pro-government gunmen transported some of their relatives to neighboring Alawite villages and executed them there. According to Lina, in her mid-twenties, who lived near the village square and the school, 20 men in military uniforms entered her house and said they wanted to arrest the men.

They took my father, my uncle, my cousin, and our neighbor [name of relatives withheld for security reasons].⁶²

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁶¹ Footage on file with Human Rights Watch.

My mother ran after them asking them to return her husband. The gunmen repeated, “Half an hour and will bring him back.” We don’t know where they took them.

My husband [who had been taken to village square but was part of the group saved by an officer] came back home. He went looking for my father. He headed to the square which is about 100 meters from our house. He went to the shop of Azzam but could not see the body.⁶³

Later, Lina identified her father on YouTube footage that showed at least eight dead men lying on the ground with men in military uniforms standing over them. The ground underneath the bodies is not paved. Lina identified her father based on his clothes. According to Lina and to other al-Bayda residents who saw the footage, they did not recognize the surroundings, indicating it was not filmed in their village. The family never recovered Lina’s father’s body.



Screenshot from footage that shows at least eight dead men lying on the ground with men in military uniforms standing over them. One witness, Lina, identified her father in this video based on his clothes.⁶⁴

⁶² Human Rights Watch interview with Lina, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GC32vbqpKHY> (accessed July 31, 2013).

Majed who lived in Layla's neighborhood also told Human Rights Watch that he believed some of the men from their neighborhood were transferred to neighboring Alawite villages:

The security forces searched the entire neighborhood. Some of the men were taken to the primary school, while others were transferred to the main square. Those in the primary school were transferred in 2 or 3 trucks and taken to neighboring Alawite villages. Jaysiyyeh and Dahr al-Zawbet, Mawrad. I saw an Isuzu pick-up truck, like those used to carry vegetables, transport the men.⁶⁵

When queried as to how he knew where the men were taken, the witness said that they had received the information from residents of these villages that did not approve of what happened but were too fearful to speak up.

Human Rights Watch cannot independently verify the allegations that residents were transferred to neighboring Alawite villages and executed there. Further investigations are needed.

A Contested Execution: The Killing of Sheikh Omar al-Bayasi, His Wife, and His Son

The house of Sheikh Omar al-Bayasi, the former Imam of the village, lies at the entrance of al-Bayda's main square. Mohammad who had hidden in the neighboring forests and went to the village immediately following the withdrawal of pro-government forces in the afternoon of May 2 described what he found:

So we got to Sheikh Omar's house. His house is two stories and there is a veranda on the ground floor, right on the road. It is raised only about two meters from the ground. What we saw then was very surprising. The whole day there was shooting shelling and killing in the village yet he [the sheikh], his wife and his son Hamzeh [an adult] were all sitting on chairs on the veranda. All next to each other in a line.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

The three of them were killed on their chairs just as they sat. Hamzeh had fallen from his chair. There was a bullet in his head. He was on his back and he was holding his identity card in his hand. His mother did not fall off the chair. Her head was tilted back. When I first saw her I thought she may have had her throat slit but, no, she must have received a bullet that paralyzed her nerves. So her head was tilted back.

Sheikh Omar had fallen forward. He too was shot in the head. The three of them were shot in the head. They were sitting in chairs next to each other and the three of them were dead.⁶⁶

Human Rights Watch reviewed photos taken by local residents after the pro-government forces withdrew from the village. One photo clearly shows Sheikh al-Bayasi lying on the ground with dried blood on his head. Another photo shows the wife of Sheikh al-Bayasi dead in her seat and her son's body lying on the ground next to her.

According to many residents of al-Bayda, Sheikh Omar al-Bayasi, the former imam of the village, was a supporter of the government and a member of the National Reconciliation



Photo of Sheikh Omar al-Bayasi following his execution. © Private.



Photo showing wife of Sheikh Omar al-Bayasi and her son Hamzeh. © Private

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

committee that the government had set up.⁶⁷ Many pro-government Facebook pages as well as some Syrian media outlets that are generally pro-government accused opposition gunmen of killing him.⁶⁸ On a recent visit to al-Bayda, a Wall Street Journal correspondent interviewed a man who identified himself as a relative of Sheikh al-Bayasi and who blamed opposition fighters for executing the sheikh and his family before retreating from the village.⁶⁹

Local residents and an opposition fighter interviewed by Human Rights Watch vehemently deny this. They readily admit that Sheikh al-Bayasi had been a supporter of the government and that his support had caused tensions with many local residents.⁷⁰ However, they accuse pro-government forces of killing him and his family either because he was a direct witness to the executions that took place near his house or to try to frame the executions as the actions of the opposition gunmen.

Human Rights Watch was unable to find any direct witnesses to the execution of Sheikh al-Bayasi and his family so has no evidence to support either of the competing versions of who killed them.

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch interviews with Lama, Majed, Mohammad, June 27-28, 2013, Turkey. See news reports referring to his membership in the National Reconciliation Committee. For example, http://www.tartous2day.com/news/show_news.php?id=4425 (accessed August 6, 2013).

⁶⁸ See for example report in http://www.tartous2day.com/news/show_news.php?id=4425 (accessed August 6, 2013).

⁶⁹ Sam Dagher, "In Syria, Signs of Civilian Massacre," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324354704578637923366819536.html>

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch interviews with Lama, Majed, Mohammad, June 27-28, 2013, Turkey.

III. The Aftermath: Hasty Escape, Looting and Burning

On the day of the killings, May 2, pro-government gunmen burnt and looted a number of homes and intentionally destroyed property, according to eight witnesses and video footage filmed by the pro-government forces and by local residents that showed homes and cars burning in what looked like fires that were not caused by shelling but by intentional actions. Mustafa N., who had hid in the hills and made his way back to the village in the late afternoon on May 2 immediately after the government and pro-government gunmen had left, described the destruction:

Probably 100 cars. All burnt. A lot of burnt houses as well. In my house the big cupboard with clothes and the bed... that room was burnt down. The cupboard was all melted including our identity cards. This is the case for most people. Those who stayed alive had nothing that could prove their identities.⁷¹

Ola, who lived near the main square, recalled how the pro-government forces took her family's car as well as two motorbikes as they departed and destroyed their appliances by shooting bullets in the TV and the refrigerator.⁷²

Residents did not linger very much to assess the damage or bury the dead for fear of the return of the gunmen. Mohammad told Human Rights Watch:

Everyone fled. After the security and shabiha [pro-government militia] left... after about 6 p.m.... there was no one at all left in the village. I mean in our residential area. Everyone fled. Many fled to the church in the Christian neighborhood of al-Bayda. Then another group of people fled to the neighboring village of Mrah where many sheltered in the church. These two churches served as shelters. A lot of women and children stayed there because they no longer had homes. A group stayed in a tomato factory.

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Mustafa, July 5, 2013, Lebanon.

⁷² Human Rights Watch interview with Ola, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

We did not know how to bury the dead as there were so many bodies. So we said we would do it tomorrow. As we couldn't bury anyone we decided that each one of us will have to find their own shelter where to hide, a cave or whatever, because it was possible that they would come the following day to finish off the rest.⁷³

Lama described the chaos in the village that afternoon:

People were running around, jumping over the bodies. No one was daring to look. Nobody had the courage to look for their children or sisters or brothers. Nobody. People were just trying to run away. There was talk of snipers in the mountains so people were trying to take off fast. People were trying to run wherever they could. Some took to the forested area, some to Mrah. They were scared of being shot.

They didn't even bury my husband. They left him. So I pulled him all the way... He was on the floor but I put him on a carpet with the help of someone and took him to the mosque. I asked someone to tell his mother to get us some clothes because he had been stripped of his clothes. So she arranged that. So we clothed him and I covered him with the carpet. I then bid him farewell. My mother-in-law took the kids and left while my brother-in-law and his wife stayed with me. We walked in the forested area until we reached the place called Mrah. This is a Christian area. The Christians saw us and said, "Come here, get inside the church."

There was even a farmer on the way... a man who was injured but not dead. He was pleading for help but no one could help him. No one could carry him. Everyone had their own kids to look after. The following day they found him dead.⁷⁴

⁷³ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Lama, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

The next day, May 3, some residents tried to go back to the village to check on their belongings and see if they could bury their relatives. However, pro-government forces had returned to the village and proceeded to loot and burn additional homes. Lama told Human Rights Watch:

My brother-in-law tried to go on the Friday [May 3]. But he got terrified. He heard a bullet being fired and he got scared so he went and came back immediately. There was so much smoke like something plastic was burning. It was black smoke over the village. We could see it from Mrah.⁷⁵

A Christian resident of al-Bayda, Sami, who had stayed in his house in the uphill part of the village confirmed to Human Rights Watch that most of the burning in the village occurred on the second day:

The second day, I saw much more smoke. I think on May 2 when the massacre occurred, they only burned a few houses.⁷⁶

Mustafa N. had checked on his house on the first night and found that only one room had been burned but later found out that security forces had returned to his house and burnt it entirely:

Our house was set on fire the second day. The first day it was only the closet that had burned down. The following day it was all burnt. The only things that remained are my family's passports and thank God for that. They are more important than the house.⁷⁷

Razan B., a local resident, told Human Rights Watch:

The next day [May 3] we sent some young men to check on the house. They came back saying that our house had been burned. Nothing was left. No

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Lama, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch skype interview with Sami, May 7, 2013.

⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Mustafa, July 5, 2013, Lebanon.

clothes, no money, nothing. We stayed for 15 days in neighboring villages and then we left Syria. Some, who had papers made their way to Lebanon. Those of us without papers, made our way north. I had no identity papers left. Not for me, nor for my two children. So I had to get a piece of paper saying that I had “lost my identity.”⁷⁸

According to the residents Human Rights Watch interviewed, the looting and house burning targeted only Sunni homes. Two Christian residents told Human Rights Watch that the pro-government forces did not carry out any looting or burning in the Christian neighborhood in al-Bayda.⁷⁹

On May 3, two pro-government TV stations, al-Akhbariya and the Hezbollah station al-Manar, reported from al-Bayda. Their video footage showed the burning of the houses and active fires in some of the houses and shops. Al-Akhbariya’s camera captured images of some of the bodies that were still lying on the ground, including the bodies that the witnesses had identified as those of members of the Bayasi family found on the steep road that departs from the main town square. Al-Akhbariya described them as “the bodies of the terrorists.”

⁷⁸Human Rights Watch interview with Razan, June 27, 2013, Turkey.

⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch skype interviews with Sami and Habib, May 7, 2013, and May 11, 2013.



A screenshot from a broadcast report on May 3 by the pro-government TV station al-Akhbariya that shows the burning of houses and shops in al-Bayda.⁸⁰



A screenshot from a broadcast report on May 3 by the pro-government TV station al-Akhbariya that shows the burning of houses and shops in al-Bayda.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAxDuiMDGoA> (accessed July 31, 2013).

⁸¹ Ibid.



Screenshot from footage broadcast on May 3 by the Hezbollah TV station al-Manar that shows active fires in al-Bayda’s main square.⁸²



Screenshot from footage broadcast on May 3 by the pro-government TV station al-Akhbariya shows the bodies of Bayasi family members⁸³

⁸² Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQvYrse-AmY> (accessed July 31, 2013).

⁸³ Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAxDuiMDGoA> (accessed July 31, 2013).

It was only on May 4, two days after the killings, that security forces with civil defense crews came to the village to collect the bodies and bury them, local residents said. A Christian resident, Habib, who stayed in the village throughout the killings and the aftermath told Human Rights Watch:

On Saturday [May 4], the security forces came and collected the bodies. Trucks came and dug a big hole in the village graveyard and buried the bodies above each other. The graveyard is very close to our neighborhood. The head of the municipality of Baniyas and an imam from the village of Qurayr were present. The Red Crescent and fire trucks also came on Saturday. The Red Crescent distributed aid to the families. The aid was supposed to be to the Sunni families but most of them were killed or had left to other villages.⁸⁴

Another Christian resident, Sami, described what he saw in the village square on May 4:

I saw the fire trucks cleaning the square. The smell of blood was disgusting. It was like the smell of meat when you go to the butcher. Military men were everywhere. We couldn't film or talk to the people. We did not go inside the Muslim neighborhoods because the snipers could see us. We did not see any of the bodies in the square, but could see the Red Crescent transporting some of the bodies. I then went to see where they were going to bury the killed. They [security forces] set up a new checkpoint at the graveyard. The graveyard is next to the elementary school. I saw bulldozers digging a hole in the ground. The military was instructing the bulldozers what to do. After they finished the hole, they shoved the bodies and put them in the hole. Hundreds of bodies were buried.⁸⁵

Abd al-Halim al-Shughari, an imam in al-Bayda, told a correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* that he was tasked by the government with counting the village's dead and that he

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch skype interview Habib, May 11, 2013.

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch skype interview with Sami, May 7, 2013.

tallied 139 bodies from the May 2 assault, including one found in mid-June in a nearby orchard. He said 31 bodies were so severely burned that they couldn't be identified.⁸⁶

Working with witnesses and relatives of victims, Human Rights Watch compiled a list of 167 names of people whom they believed were killed on that day (see Annex). Out of the 167, there were at least 23 women and 14 children. According to the witnesses, many of the bodies were not found or identified because they were severely burned. Majed told Human Rights Watch:

We still have women who until now are refusing to believe that their children or husbands were killed. They say, “He must be still alive because I haven’t seen his body.” There are mothers who still believe that their sons are alive. You know “a drowning man hangs on to a straw.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ “In Syria, Signs of Civilian Massacre -Residents in Bayda Say Toll Hit Hundreds, Including Children; Damascus Says It Killed Only Terrorists,” Sam Dagher, Wall Street Journal, July 30, 2013
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324354704578637923366819536.html>.

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Majed, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

IV. Killings in Ras al-Nabe`, Baniyas

As government and pro-government forces were attacking al-Bayda on May 2, fighting erupted in nearby Ras al-Nabe`, a neighborhood of the town of Baniyas situated approximately ten kilometers away from al-Bayda.

One Baniyas resident, Walid, told Human Rights Watch that he was driving from Baniyas to al-Bayda in the morning of May 2 when he heard the sound of gunfights coming from al-Bayda. He turned around to drive back to Baniyas, but heard an exchange of fire also coming from Ras al-Nabe`, forcing him to change roads again.⁸⁸

Mohammad, the opposition fighter from al-Bayda cited in previous chapters, told Human Rights Watch that while he was not certain what triggered the fighting in Ras al-Nabe`, he heard that some opposition fighters had tried to relieve the pressure of the government forces' attack on al-Bayda by attacking certain checkpoints in Ras al-Nabe`.⁸⁹

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the attack on Ras al-Nabe` took place after "rebels shot at a government checkpoint stationed on a nearby highway overpass bridge [in Ras al-Nabe`], according to residents, opposition activists and security officials."⁹⁰

Human Rights Watch interviewed five residents from Ras al-Nabe`, who were in the neighborhood or outlying areas seeking cover during the government's ground operation on May 3. The residents were not direct witnesses to the killings in Ras al-Nabe` but told Human Rights Watch they believed government and pro-government forces were responsible for the killings and that the corpses they saw appeared to have been executed. They said the victims were either shot in the chest or head or had multiple gunshot wounds on several areas on their bodies.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Walid, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad, June 28, 2013, Turkey.

⁹⁰ "In Syria, Signs of Civilian Massacre --- Residents in Bayda Say Toll Hit Hundreds, Including Children; Damascus Says It Killed Only Terrorists," Sam Dagher, *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2013 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324354704578637923366819536.html>.

Two of the residents Human Rights Watch spoke to, Ahmad and Bassam were among the first to discover the corpses after pro-government forces withdrew from the town. Two other residents, Aya and Selwa, saw government or pro-government forces return to the neighborhood to shoot at them and other neighbors who were still alive shortly after the forces had withdrawn.

According to Ahmad, Bassam, Aya, and Selwa, the Syrian government began shelling the neighborhood during the late afternoon on May 2 through the early evening. They said that the shelling resumed the following afternoon and that on both days the tank, mortar, and gunfire was coming from the Qouz and Ras al-Nabe` bridges and from al-Qouz village located to the north of Ras al-Nabe`. The shelling was not intensive, and did not result in many civilian casualties, they said.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights only identified one civilian killed by shelling in Ras al-Nabe` between May 2 and May 4.⁹¹ Rather, Ahmad, Bassam, Aya, and Selwa said it was the intentional killings by pro-government forces after they entered the neighborhood on May 3 and early in the morning on May 4, primarily from gunshot wounds to the head and upper body that caused most of the deaths.

Aya and Selwa, both from the same family, and Ahmad, told Human Rights Watch that when they attempted to leave Ras al-Nabe` on Thursday May 2, after a day of shelling, government forces at the checkpoint on the al-Nabe` bridge would not let them or other residents leave. Ahmad told Human Rights Watch:

There is a checkpoint at the bridge that connects Ras al-Nabe` with the other parts of Baniyas which means that people who want to leave Ras al-Nabe` to go to Baniyas have to cross through this checkpoint... On May 2, they... did not let people leave or come in [through the checkpoint]... I headed to the bridge with my family but [before I reached the checkpoint]...

⁹¹ Syrian Network for Human Rights. "The most heinous crime of the modern era : Banyas massacre:Blatant Ethnic cleansing in Syria", May 10, 2013, http://www.iamsyria.org/uploads/1/3/0/2/13025755/the_most_heinous_crime_of_the_modern_era_1.pdf (accessed July 31, 2013).

I saw people returning. They told us that the security forces there were not letting anyone leave.⁹²

Selwa, a local resident, told Human Rights Watch,

Thursday night we decided to try and leave the neighborhood by crossing the al-Nabe' bridge. The area that we live in was the worst hit...I am an old lady, so you understand, I was walking to the bridge slowly. I could see that people ahead were being turned around at the checkpoint, that they wouldn't let them pass. I never made it to the checkpoint, I knelt down and waited, someone else asked if we could pass, they wouldn't let us, so we were trapped. We had nowhere to go.⁹³

Aya, Selwa's daughter, gave a similar account to Human Rights Watch.

Thursday night we got ready to leave because it looked like things would not get any better. We headed towards the al-Nabe' bridge but when we got near there we saw families coming back from that direction. They told us that nobody was allowed to leave. The security forces standing at the checkpoint were wearing camouflage military suits. Usually there are two or three of them standing at the checkpoint but this time there was around seven or eight. So we went back...[The next day] my sister-in-law's brother wanted to take his family to her parent's house next to the Radwan Mosque on the other side of the bridge but the guards at the checkpoint made him turn back.⁹⁴

Executions in Ras al-Nabe`

Ahmad, Bassam, Aya and Selwa told Human Rights Watch that pro-government forces entered the neighborhood in the evening on May 3.⁹⁵ Bassam, Aya, and Selwa said they

⁹² Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

⁹³ Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; .Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

were present when the government forces entered and that immediately after troops withdrew from their streets they found the bodies of neighbors and other Ras al-Nabe` residents who appeared to have been executed.⁹⁶ Ahmad was in the outskirts of the neighborhood on May 3, where he was hiding because of the shelling and arrived shortly after government forces left the area. He also found bodies of residents that appeared to have been executed.⁹⁷

Ahmad, Bassam, Aya and Selwa identified to Human Rights Watch 30 men, 22 women, and 29 children, who were killed that day by execution.⁹⁸ Each of them told Human Rights Watch that they located the bodies of entire families, including children, that were killed together.⁹⁹ The wounds, including gunshot wounds to the head and chest, and the location of the bodies, sometimes found in piles on the street, led them to believe that they had been executed.¹⁰⁰ According to Ahmad, Bassam, Aya and Selwa, all of the executed residents were civilians.¹⁰¹ The Syrian Network for Human Rights, a Syrian monitoring group, has identified 188 civilians, including 54 children and 43 women, that were allegedly killed in Ras al-Nabe` neighborhood in Baniyas on May 3-4 by execution.¹⁰² Eighteen of these are unidentified individuals. This is the most complete list of casualties that Human Rights Watch has reviewed, but casualty figures may be higher given the difficulties some activists have reported in being able to access the area to bury and account for the dead.

Execution of Members of the Suleiman, Taha, and Skeif Families

Ahmad and Bassam told Human Rights Watch that during the evening of May 3 they saw near the beginning of the neighborhood a pile of approximately 30 corpses of individuals,

⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Syrian Network for Human Rights. "The most heinous crime of the modern era : Banyas massacre:Blatant Ethnic cleansing in Syria", May 10, 2013, http://www.iamsyria.org/uploads/1/3/0/2/13025755/the_most_heinous_crime_of_the_modern_era_1.pdf (accessed July 31, 2013).

including at least seven women and six children, primarily from the Suleiman and Taha families.¹⁰³ In addition, three of the dead were identified as from the Skeif family.

Bassam, told Human Rights Watch that he saw armed individuals who he believed to be members of the security forces or army because of the way they were dressed enter the neighborhood in the evening. He then heard his neighbor from the Suleiman family screaming in the street that his parents had been killed. He said that he found him standing over the bodies of more than 30 residents on the street: “I ran to him to see what had happened, and he was just standing there in front of his entire family which had been killed.”¹⁰⁴

Bassam said that in addition to eight individuals from the Suleiman family, there were an additional 22 people killed with them, among them 13 he recognized from the Taha family. He said that the bodies were next to a wall on the side of the street by an electricity pole. He said that from what he could see the residents appeared to have been shot in the head and the body. There were also bullet markings on the wall behind them. He believed that they were executed there.¹⁰⁵ A second resident, Ahmad also identified members of the Suleiman and Taha families in this pile who had been killed. He said that they, and all of the corpses he saw had been shot in the chest or head, or had multiple gunshot wounds on several areas on their bodies.¹⁰⁶

A third resident, Aya, said she saw Sarah Taha after the killings, who told her that her entire family was killed while she hid, including two brothers, their wives, and her mother.¹⁰⁷

Bassam told Human Rights Watch that an additional six corpses in the pile were people from Homs and that three people from the Skeif family, two women and Mohammad Skeif’s infant daughter, whose legs were burnt, were also in the group.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

After scanning the bodies for several minutes, Bassam told Human Rights Watch that he headed back to his home but because government forces were shooting in the street he had to divert his route and went to a neighbor's home. On the way he encountered more bodies in the street. Some of these were burnt and some were shot in the head. He estimated that he saw 12 additional bodies, but that he did not go near enough to see the faces.¹⁰⁹

From its interviews with Ahmad, Aya, and Bassam, Human Rights Watch was able to identify nine of the executed men, seven women, and six children from the Suleiman, Taha, and Skeif families:¹¹⁰

- Ra`fat Suleiman
- Safwan Suleiman (son of Ra`fat)
- Isam Suleiman (son of Ra`fat)
- Abu Abd Suleiman
- Khadijha Taha (married to Abu Abd Suleiman)
- Khadijha Taha's three children under the age of 18
- Sabah Taha
- Ali Taha (son of Sabah)
- Ahmad Taha (son of Sabah)
- Jamila Taha
- Marwan Taha
- Tarik Taha
- Ayesha Taha¹¹¹
- Ghada Taha
- Fatat Taha
- Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul [Husband's last name is Taha]
- Mohammad Taha – child (son of Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul)
- Yousra Taha – child (daughter of Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹¹¹ The Syrian Network for Human Rights identifies her as the wife of Ra'fat Suleiman. Syrian Network for Human Rights. "The most heinous crime of the modern era : Banyas massacre:Blatant Ethnic cleansing in Syria", May 10, 2013, http://www.iamsyria.org/uploads/1/3/0/2/13025755/the_most_heinous_crime_of_the_modern_era_1.pdf (accessed July 31, 2013).

- Yasser Taha – child (son of Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul)
- Mohammad Skeif’s daughter – infant

Execution of Members of the Jalloul family

Human Rights Watch has also documented the execution of seventeen members of the Jalloul family. Aya, their neighbor, told Human Rights Watch that on Friday May 3 that she, her family, and some other neighbors, were seeking shelter from shelling when at around 8:30 p.m. she heard men outside and the sound of breaking glass. At around 10:00 p.m. a neighbor came to their house devastated, saying that he saw the bodies of Abd al-Rahman Jalloul (also known as Abu Sa`id) and his family. When she heard this, Aya went to their house and saw the corpses of family members.¹¹² Another one of their relatives was injured but not yet dead, Aya said.

We all went to their [Abd al-Rahman Jalloul’s family] houses which are around 50-100 meters away from us and I saw Bayan Jalloul, who is 21, shot in the head. I turn around and I saw Rawan, her 17-year-old sister, also shot in the chest but she was still alive. I looked around the house and saw Abu Sa`id, their father, shot and that his legs were tied. Umm Sa`id, their mother, was also shot in the head. She was 55 years old.¹¹³

Aya told Human Rights Watch that her relative, who she saw at Abu Sa`id’s house shortly after the government and pro-government forces left, had spoken to Umm Sa`id just before she was killed “She told me that she was speaking with Umm Sa`id at around 8:30 or 9:00 [p.m.] on the phone and that suddenly she heard Umm Sa`id screaming and pleading for mercy,” Aya recounted. “Then she heard gunshots.”¹¹⁴

Selwa, Aya’s mother, told Human Rights Watch in a separate interview about how she and her family discovered their murdered neighbors. She said,

¹¹² Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

I found Abu Sa`id at the entrance of the house. Rawan was not dead at that point and I spoke to her and she told me that she was burnt...Their living room was on fire. I checked Abu Sa`id to see if he was breathing. He wasn't, and his legs were tied with either his wife's or one of his daughter's hijabs. Umm Sa`id was lying on her side. No one else was tied. It was dark so I couldn't see clearly, but I could feel the blood... Rawan was covered with blood.¹¹⁵

Aya told Human Rights Watch that after they located the bodies, government or pro-government forces returned to the scene and fired repeatedly in their direction. She fled to a neighbor's house. This is her account of what happened:

I saw the lights of a car. It was coming from Qouz area, driving down the cliff. We all panicked. I ran away to [a neighbor's house] and hid...It was very dark. I sat on the floor and suddenly I heard the sound of a women breathing heavily. It was Mona, Sa`id Jalloul's wife. Sa`id is... 30 years old and has two children, Ghazal and Abd al-Rahman. She told me that Sana, [Sa`id's sister], had been shot and that she was praying. She died while praying. I put my hand on Mona trying to move her but I felt blood. She was also shot in the stomach. Abd al-Rahman, Mona's son, who is 4 years old, was crying quietly. He told me that Syrian security forces with guns came in and shot them.¹¹⁶

Four year old Abd al-Rahman was the sole survivor from Abd al-Rahman Jalloul's family.

After the car left, Aya went back outside and found Ahmad Jalloul shot in the chest next to his car. A neighbor who was outside of their home told Aya that she played dead when the security forces returned and saw them shoot and kill Ahmad. When she returned, Aya saw that Rawan and Bayan had been moved inside Ahmad's car, but by that time they were both dead, Aya said.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Selwa told Human Rights Watch that Muhammad al-Zouzou, Rawan's fiancé and a member of the Free Syrian Army, came to their house after the attack. When he saw that she was injured he left to get help. Zouzou was himself later killed elsewhere in the village. She said that no one else in the family was affiliated with the rebels.¹¹⁸

Ahmad, told Human Rights Watch that when he returned to the village from outlying areas where he was seeking shelter during the shelling in the evening, he saw several groups of corpses of people who appeared to have been executed, including at least ten from the Abdelkader Jalloul family, another branch of the Jalloul family in Ras al Nabe'.

The first pile I saw at the beginning of the neighborhood consisted of 25 bodies. I approached the pile and I saw that the first 5 or 8 were shot in the head or in the chest. Some had multiple gunshots. I couldn't look at the bodies at the bottom of the pile because I was scared to touch them but for sure they were all dead. I saw one body stabbed. It had cuts in the stomach. The body belonged to a man.¹¹⁹

Ahmad said he estimated that not less than 10 of the bodies in this pile belonged to Abdelkader Jalloul's family, whom he knew. He said that he understood that other members of the Abdelkader Jalloul family had also been killed in other parts of the neighborhood.¹²⁰

Selwa told Human Rights Watch that in the evening on May 3, after government and pro-government forces had gone through her neighborhood, she went to the home of Abdelkader Jalloul and that his leg had been cut, his head injured, and he was shot while in bed. The body of his wife, Halima Ayrout, was also in the bedroom. She also saw the bodies of Ahmad (78 years old) and Oussama (80 years old) in the home and said that Mahmoud Abdelkader Jalloul his wife Amal and their two kids Suhaib and Mohammad were also killed.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

From interviews with Ahmad, Aya, and Selwa, Human Rights Watch was able to confirm the names of seven of the executed men, six women, and four children from the Jalloul family:¹²²

- Abd al-Rahman (also known as Abu Sa`id) Jalloul
- Umm Sa`id Jalloul
- Bayan Jalloul
- Rawan Jalloul – child
- Mona, Sa`id Jalloul’s wife
- Sa`id Jalloul
- Ghazal Jalloul – child
- Sana Jalloul
- Ahmad Jalloul
- Abdelkader Jalloul
- Halima Ayrout (wife of Abdelkader Jalloul)
- Mahmoud Jalloul
- Amal (wife of Mahmoud Jalloul)
- Suhaib Jalloul and Mohammad Jalloul – children (of Mahmoud and Amal)
- Ahmad Jalloul
- Oussama Jalloul

Execution of Members of the Rajab Family

Ahmad told Human Rights Watch that after the government and pro-government forces withdrew, he also saw the corpses of members of the Mahmoud and Ahmad Rajab families, including the two men, both their wives, five children, and three sisters. Ahmad said that based on their wounds, which showed they had been shot in the head, chest, or multiple times, or stabbed, that they appeared to have been executed.¹²³ Local residents and opposition activists have reported over 20 casualties from the Rajab family.¹²⁴

¹²² Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹²³ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹²⁴ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; The Syrian Network for Human Rights identifies 21 victims from the Rajab family Syrian Network for Human Rights. “The most heinous crime of the modern era : Banyas massacre:Blatant Ethnic cleansing in Syria”, May 10, 2013, http://www.iam Syria.org/uploads/1/3/0/2/13025755/the_most_heinous_crime_of_the_modern_era_1.pdf (accessed July 31, 2013).

Bassam, a local resident, told Human Rights Watch that Mahmoud and Ahmad Rajab's parents' corpses were also among those that he saw in the neighborhood after government and pro-government forces withdrew. He also said that their sisters and their husbands were killed but could not identify them by name. Bassam added that after he left the area, he saw in the mosque in a neighboring village a girl from the Rajab family who died there from her wounds.¹²⁵ Aya said that a friend told her Fatme Rajab who was pregnant was among the dead.¹²⁶

From interviews with Ahmad, Aya, and Bassam, Human Rights Watch was able to identify three of the executed men, four women, and five children from the Rajab family:¹²⁷

- Mahmoud Rajab
- Mahmoud Rajab's wife
- Ahmad Rajab
- Ahmad Rajab's wife¹²⁸
- Karam and Mustafa Rajab (Ahmad Rajab's sons) – children
- Mahmoud Rajab's three minor children
- Mustafa Rajab (Mahmoud and Ahmab Rajab's father)
- Mahmoud and Ahmab Rajab's mother
- Fatme Rajab

Execution of Other Families in Ras al-Nabe`

Ahmad, Aya, Bassam, and Selwa told Human Rights Watch that in the aftermath of the Syrian government's ground operation and home raids, that they traveled through the

¹²⁵ Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹²⁶ Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹²⁷ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹²⁸ The Syrian Network for Human Rights identifies her as Tahani Alasar. Syrian Network for Human Rights. "The most heinous crime of the modern era : Banyas massacre:Blatant Ethnic cleansing in Syria", May 10, 2013, http://www.iamsyria.org/uploads/1/3/0/2/13025755/the_most_heinous_crime_of_the_modern_era_1.pdf (accessed July 31, 2013).

streets checking on neighbors and came across piles of corpses often including people from the same family who had been executed, including children.¹²⁹

Ahmad told Human Rights Watch that among the first group of corpses he saw were the bodies of Nouwar Lolo, Mahmoud Lolo, Mohammad al-Zouzou, and Bassam al-Zouzou.¹³⁰ Bassam said he saw the apparently executed bodies of the brothers Nouwar and Mahmoud Lolo.¹³¹ Ahmad and Bassam both said they saw the bodies of Issa al-Turk and his 7-year-old-son.¹³² Bassam said he saw six family members from the al-Namroud family including the wife, husband and four children, and nine members from the al-Sabbagh family including Abu Khaled, his son and daughter, who are children, and his cousin. He said he also saw the bodies of Khadijha Hussein, Abu Abed Sheikh and his brother, Ra`fat Sheikh.¹³³

Bassam told Human Rights Watch that at around midnight he and a group of about 100 other people set out to flee the area. As they were fleeing, he saw additional bodies on the streets and in people's homes, some of which he entered to see if anyone needed help. One was Amina Aleena's corpse, who had been shot in her home. He also saw a group of 14 bodies on the street and bullet marks on the wall above them. The corpses, mostly of men, had their hands tied behind their backs with plastic. Among the dead, Bassam said, he recognized Rajeb Hijazi and his wife.¹³⁴

Selwa told Human Rights Watch that after she had fled the area that evening with her family that she spoke to the husband of Badiaa Salha, who told her that his wife and their seven children had all been killed.¹³⁵

Similarly to what occurred in al-Bayda, Ahmad, Aya, Bassam, and Selwa told Human Rights Watch that they saw, or saw evidence of government forces burning homes and in some

¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³⁰ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³² Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³³ Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

cases bodies in Ras al-Nabe`.¹³⁶ Ahmad said that he saw three homes that had been burnt when he returned to Ras al-Nabe` on May 4.¹³⁷ Aya and Selwa told Human Rights Watch that government or pro-government forces set their garden and house on fire.¹³⁸ When asked how she knew that the fire in her home was set intentionally, Selwa said that separate fires were started in rooms throughout the house so that it would all be impacted.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Bassam, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch Interview, Ahmad, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³⁸ Human Rights Watch Interview, Aya, May 13, 2013, Lebanon; Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

¹³⁹ Human Rights Watch Interview, Selwa, May 13, 2013, Lebanon.

V. The Perpetrators

Lama, Ola, Samira, Lina, Mohammad, and Majed, who were in al-Bayda on May 2 told Human Rights Watch that the forces who entered the village on May 2 were a mix of regular government troops, members of the National Defense Force, a paramilitary group organized earlier in the year by the government from pro-government militias, and armed pro-government residents of neighboring villages.¹⁴⁰ Samira said she saw soldiers enter her house with black tags on their sleeves identifying them as Special Forces.¹⁴¹ Razan said she saw fighters in military uniform with red tags with “National Defense” (‘ Watani) written on them.¹⁴² Lama, Ola, and Lina, said they saw some armed men who they thought were shabiha because they had big beards and “did not look military.”

Video footage and interviews broadcast by pro-government media confirm the role of the army and the National Defense Force. Sama Channel, a pro-government news station, was present in the hills surrounding al-Bayda during the fighting on May 2 and interviewed soldiers on the outskirts of town who indicated that it was the army and National Defense who led the attack. One man in a military uniform tells the camera: “Today we will finish off al- Bayda. The army and the National Defense are ready.”¹⁴³

The Hezbollah TV station al-Manar, aired an interview about the al-Bayda operation on May 3 with an unnamed military man wearing a shoulder patch with the word “national” on it. The patch possibly signifies that the man was a member of the newly created National Defense Forces. A second military man interviewed onsite by al-Manar has a black badge on his shoulder with the word “special” (khasat), which may indicate membership of Syria’s Special Forces.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ When asked about the National Defense Forces, a military commander told Reuters: “They started out as popular committees patrolling their neighborhoods. Then they became armed groups. And in late 2012, they were legitimized under the name National Defence Forces (NDF)”. “Battered by war, Syrian army creates its own replacement,” Reuters, April 21, 2013 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/21/us-syria-crisis-paramilitary-insight-idUSBRE93K02R20130421>. See also Liz Sly, “Assad forces gaining ground in Syria,” Washington Post, May 12, 2013 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/assad-forces-gaining-ground-in-syria/2013/05/11/79147c34-b99c-11e2-b568-6917f6ac6d9d_story.html

¹⁴¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Samira, July 27, 2013, Turkey.

¹⁴² Human Rights Watch interview with Razan, July 27, 2013, Turkey.

¹⁴³ Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFIVTt5cBHE> (accessed July 31, 2013).

¹⁴⁴ Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fh_Z1RmKHw (accessed July 31, 2013).



Screenshots from footage broadcast on May 3 by the Hezbollah TV station al-Manar shows interviews with unnamed military men onsite about the al-Bayda operation.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

VI. Government Denials

The Syrian government acknowledged that it conducted military operations in al-Bayda and Baniyas but said that its forces had only responded to ambushes by rebels, and that security forces killed only “terrorists.”¹⁴⁶ Pro-government media outlets reported on the killings on May 2 and aired footage showing dead bodies in al-Bayda, claiming that they were “terrorists.” Commenting on the Ras al-Nabe` operation, on May 15, the Syrian government reported through its state-run news agency SANA that the Syrian Army had “restored security and stability” to Ras al-Nabe` by eliminating the “armed terrorists groups” in the area.¹⁴⁷

Ali Haidar, minister of state for national reconciliation affairs, told the *Wall Street Journal* that “mistakes” may have been made and that a government committee was investigating. But he also said that the government was forced to act to deny rebels a foothold in a part of Syria considered the heartland of the Alawites, a community that makes up the core of President Assad's regime, and the country's only access to the sea.

“The state has the right to do so,” he said. “This is a very sensitive area and the highway [referring to the coastal highway] could be disrupted.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ See for example, Syria Street, a local news website that is generally pro-government, reported on May 2, that a “military source” in the Syrian military told them that the Syrian army had taken control of the town of al-Bayda following clashes with armed men <http://sy-street.net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D9%8A%D8%B7%D9%88%D9%91%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3.html>

¹⁴⁷ <http://sana.sy/eng/21/2013/05/15/482289.htm>

¹⁴⁸ “In Syria, Signs of Civilian Massacre --- Residents in Bayda Say Toll Hit Hundreds, Including Children; Damascus Says It Killed Only Terrorists,” Sam Dagher, *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2013 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324354704578637923366819536.html>

Acknowledgements

This report was researched and written by Nadim Houry, deputy director in the Middle East & North Africa division, and Lama Fakhri, Syria and Lebanon researcher. The report was edited by Joe Stork, deputy director in the Middle East and North Africa Division; Clive Baldwin, senior legal advisor; and Tom Porteous, deputy program director. Research assistance was provided by Diana Semaan, associate in the Middle East & North Africa division.

Production and coordination was provided by Sandy Elkhoury, associate in the Middle East and North Africa division. Grace Choi, publications director, Kathy Mills, publications specialist, and Fitzroy Hepkins, administrative manager, prepared the report for publication.

We especially wish to thank Syrian victims and witnesses who shared their stories with us, as well as the Syrians who helped us in our research, often at great personal risk.

Annex 1: Identified Victims in al-Bayda

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Jamal Ismail | 29. Shahadeh Mohammad Taha |
| 2. Ali Jamal Ismail | 30. Mohammad Shahadeh Taha
(son of Shahadeh) |
| 3. Anwar Fouad Jaafar | 31. Maher Mohammad Taha |
| 4. Hassan Fouad Jaafar | 32. Ahmad Shahadeh Taha |
| 5. Abd al-Sattar Mohammad al-Qadi | 33. Yaser Shahada Taha |
| 6. Abd al-Qader Ahmad Hussein | 34. Muyaser Shahada Taha |
| 7. Ahmad Mohammad al-Shughari | 35. Mustafa Taha |
| 8. Mohammad Ahmad al-Shughari
(son of Ahmad Mohammad al-Shughary) | 36. Mohammad Taha |
| 9. Othman Ahmad al-Shughari (son of Ahmad Mohammad al-Shughary) | 37. Safi Mohammad Taha |
| 10. Maher al-Shughariy | 38. Khalid Mohammad Taha |
| 11. Mohammad Zaher al-Shughari | 39. Mohammad Khalid Taha
(son of Khalid and grandson of Mohammad) |
| 12. Abd al- Rahman Abd al- Qader al-Shughari | 40. Maher Mohammad Qaddour |
| 13. Abd al- Mun`em Abd al- Qader al-Shughari | 41. Usama Mohammad Qaddour |
| 14. Ibrahim Mohammad al-Shughari | 42. Hikmat Mohammad Qaddour |
| 15. Abd al-Raziq al-Shughari | 43. Mohammad Hikmat Qaddour |
| 16. Usama Abd al-Raziq al-Shughari | 44. Mustafa Hussein Qaddour |
| 17. Abd al- Khaliq Ahmad al-Shughari
(grandson of Abd al- Raziq) | 45. Mohammad Hussein Qaddour |
| 18. Ibrahim Hamed Mustafa al-Shughari | 46. Jalal Hussein Qaddour |
| 19. Ahmad Ibrahim al-Shughari | 47. Hadif Hussein Qaddour |
| 20. Abd al-Qader Mohammad Taha | 48. Mustafa Mohammad Qaddour |
| 21. Muhanad Mohammad Taha | 49. Fatima Mustafa A`soom
(wife of Mustafa Qaddour) |
| 22. Ibrahim Mohammad Taha | 50. Ahmad Mohammad Qaddour |
| 23. Mustafa Abd al-Qader Taha | 51. Abdul-Qader Mohammad Qaddour |
| 24. Mohammad Mustafa Taha | 52. Mahmud Hassan Namoura |
| 25. Abd al- Rahman Mustafa Taha | 53. Mohammad Hassan Namoura
(Mahmud's brother) |
| 26. Omar Youssef Taha | 54. Hayat Youssef Taha
(wife of Mohammad Hassan Namoura) |
| 27. Khayr al-Din Youssef Taha | 55. Ahmad Mohammad Bayasi |
| 28. Mohammad Youssef Taha | |

56. Mohammad Ahmad Bayasi
(son of Ahmad Bayasi)
57. Khalid Ibrahim Bayasi
58. Abdallah Mohammad Bayasi
59. Aisha Hussein (Abdullah's wife)
60. Nasiba Abdallah Bayasi
(daughter of Abdullah Bayasi)
61. Rania Abdallah Bayasi
(daughter of Abdullah Bayasi)
62. Samia Abdalah Bayasi
(daughter of Abdullah Bayasi)
63. Ahlam Abdallah Bayasi
(daughter of Abdullah Bayasi)
64. Wala' Abdallah Bayasi
(daughter of Abdullah Bayasi)
65. Ahmad Abdallah Bayasi
66. Mohammad Abdallah Bayasi
67. Saffa Ali Bayasi
(wife of Mohammad Bayasi)
68. Abdallah Mohammad Bayasi
(son of Mohammad Bayasi)
69. Aisha Mohammad Bayasi
(daughter of Abul `Abd)
70. Sara Mohammad Bayasi
(daughter of Abul `Abd)
71. Mohammad Bayasi
(son of Abul `Abd)
72. Halima Mohammad Bayasi
(daughter of Abul `Abd)
73. Hamza Mohammad Bayasi
(daughter of Abul `Abd)
74. Youssef Mohammad Bayasi
75. Mustafa Youssef Bayasi
(son of Youssef)
76. Mohammad Youssef Bayasi
77. Ezz Al-Din Saeed Bayasi
78. Muaz Abdul-Men`em Bayasi
79. Amneh Abdul-Men`em Bayasi
80. Aiman Abdul-Men`em Bayasi
81. Afnan Abdul-Men`em Bayasi
82. Salem Ahmad Khadam
83. Zakaria Ahmad Hussein
84. Manar Kamil Bayasi
(wife of Zakaria)
85. Youssef Sulayman Yassin
86. Mustafa Youssef Yassin
87. Karam Amr Suweid
88. Omar Aziz Bayasi
89. Yusra Hussein
(wife of Omar Bayasi)
90. Hamza Omar Bayasi
(son of Omar Bayasi)
91. Omar Ahmad Bayasi
92. Othman Mustafa Suweid
93. Said Mustafa Suweid
94. Ahmad Mustafa Suweid
95. Mohammad Mustafa Suweid
96. Ali Mohammad al-Harith
97. Jameela Mustafa Qaddour
98. Jameela Munir Qadour
99. Khaldiyah Hussein
100. Marwan Ali Khalil
101. Saffa Ali Khalil
102. Mustafa Ali Bayasi
103. Aisha Abd al- Qader Qadour
(wife of Mustafa Bayasi)
104. Ahmad Youssef Mahmoud
105. Mohammad Ahmad Mahmoud
106. Khalid Youssef Mahmoud
107. Mohammad Ali Mahmoud
(Nouniya)
108. Sha`ban Ahmad Sha`ban
109. Mustafa Ahmad Sha`ban
110. Haytham al-Agha
111. Ahmad Abdul-Rahman
112. Abdul Rahman Ahmad Wareed

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 113. Mohammad Mustafa Da`bool | 143. Mohammad Abdul-Aziz Hamoudeh
(grandfather) |
| 114. Mustafa Mohammad Da`bool | 144. Mu`in Abdul-Aziz Hamoudeh |
| 115. Ahmad Hussein Jaafar | 145. Ahmad Ali Saqr |
| 116. Ahmad Shaaban Al-Mohammad | 146. Ahmad Mustafa Saqr |
| 117. Hassan Mohammad Othman | 147. Ibrahim Mustafa Saqr |
| 118. Abdul-Karim Mohammad Othman | 148. Osama Mustafa Saqr |
| 119. Ahmad Mohammad Othman | 149. Ahmad Suweid |
| 120. Ahmad Ali Hussein | 150. Safwan Ahmad Suweid |
| 121. Ali Ahmad Hussein | 151. Manal Mohammad Saqr |
| 122. `Ala' Ahmad Hussein | 152. Lawi Namoura |
| 123. Mustafa Omar Hussein | 153. Muzher A`thoom |
| 124. Majed Omar Hussein | 154. Mustafa Sab'e |
| 125. Mu`in Ali Khalil | 155. Khalid Sab'e |
| 126. Faris Mustafa Khalil | 156. `Alaa Ismael |
| 127. Mohammad Abdul-Rahman Ismail | 157. Abed Ahmad
(father – Tamina family) |
| 128. Sana Mohammad Ismail | 158. Mohammad Abed Ahmad
(son of Abed Ahmad) |
| 129. Walid Mohammad (Hanood) | 159. Walid Abed Ahmad
(son of Abed Ahmad) |
| 130. Mohammad (Hanood) | 160. Youssef Yasin |
| 131. Mustafa Ahmad (Khalouf) Sha`ban | 161. Adnan Youssef Yasin |
| 132. Mohammad Abdul-Rahman Ismail | 162. Lokman Youssef Al Haras |
| 133. Othman Ahmad Othman | 163. Abd al-Rhman Ahmad Hawash
(family nick name is Hawash) |
| 134. Ahmad Mohammad Othman | 164. Ziad Ahmad Hawash |
| 135. Hussein Mohammad Ismail | 165. Mohammad Ahmad Hawash |
| 136. Omar Mohammad Al-Sheikh | 166. Ali Ahmad Hawash |
| 137. Ali Mohammad Al-Sheik | 167. Ahmad Ahmad Hawash |
| 138. Majid Mohammad Al-Sheikh | |
| 139. Amar Mohammad Al-Sheikh | |
| 140. Mohammad Khalil Khalil | |
| 141. Ghassan Mohammad Hussein | |
| 142. Mohammad Abdul-Aziz Hamoudeh | |

Annex 2: Identified Victims in Ras al-Nabe`

1. Ra`fat Suleiman
2. Safwan Suleiman
(son of Ra`fat)
3. Isam Suleiman
(son of Ra`fat)
4. Abu Abd Suleiman
5. Khadijha Taha
(married to Abu Abd Suleiman)
6. Khadijha Taha's first child
7. Khadijha Taha's second child
8. Khadijha Taha's third child
9. Sabah Taha
10. Ali Taha
(son of Sabah)
11. Ahmad Taha
(son of Sabah)
12. Jamila Taha
13. Marwan Taha
14. Tarik Taha
15. Ayesha Taha
16. Ghada Taha
17. Fatat Taha
18. Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul
[Husband's last name is Taha]
19. Mohammad Taha
(son of Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul)
20. Yousra Taha – child
(daughter of Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul)
21. Yasser Taha – child
(son of Latifa Abd al-Kader Jalloul)
22. Mohammad Skeif's daughter – infant
23. Abd al-Rahman
(also known as Abu Sa`id) Jalloul
24. Umm Sa`id Jalloul
25. Bayan Jalloul
26. Rawan Jalloul – child
27. Mona, Sa`id Jalloul's wife
28. Sa`id Jalloul
29. Ghazal Jalloul – child
30. Sana Jalloul
31. Ahmad Jalloul
32. Abdelkader Jalloul
33. Halima Ayrout
(wife of Abdelkader Jalloul)
34. Mahmoud Jalloul
35. Amal (wife of Mahmoud Jalloul)
36. Suhaib Jalloul – child
(of Mahmoud and Amal)
37. Mohammad Jalloul – child
(of Mahmoud and Amal)
38. Ahmad Jalloul
39. Oussama Jalloul
40. Mahmoud Rajab
41. Mahmoud Rajab's wife
42. Ahmad Rajab
43. Tahani Alasar
(wife of Ahmad Rajab)
44. Karam Rajab – child
(son of Ahmad Rajab)
45. Mustafa Rajab – child
(son of Ahmad Rajab)
46. Mahmoud Rajab's first child
47. Mahmoud Rajab's second child
48. Mahmoud Rajab's third child
49. Mustafa Rajab
(father of Mahmoud and Ahmab Rajab)
50. Mahmoud and Ahmab Rajab's mother
51. Fatme Rajab

52. Nouwar Lolo
53. Mahmoud Lolo
54. Mohammad al-Zouzou
55. Bassam al-Zouzou
56. Issa al-Turk
57. 7-year-old-son of Issa al-Turk
58. Child from al-Namroud family
59. Child from al-Namroud family
60. Child from al-Namroud family
61. Child from al-Namroud family
62. Father of the four al-Namroud children
63. Mother of the four al-Namroud children
64. Abu Khaled al-Sabbagh
65. Abu Khaled al-Sabbagh's son – child
66. Abu Khaled al-Sabbagh's daughter – child
67. Abu Khaled al-Sabbagh's cousin
68. Khadijha Hussein
69. Abu Abed Sheikh
(brother of Ra`fat Sheikh)
70. Ra`fat Sheikh
(brother of Abu Abed Sheikh)
71. Amina Aleena
72. Rajeb Hijazi
73. Rajeb Hijazi's wife
74. Badiaa Salha
75. Badiaa Salha's first child
76. Badiaa Salha's second child
77. Badiaa Salha's third child
78. Badiaa Salha's fourth child
79. Badiaa Salha's fifth child
80. Badiaa Salha's sixth child
81. Badiaa Salha's seventh child

In the morning of May 2, 2013, Syrian government forces and pro-government militias clashed with opposition fighters in the town of al-Bayda, a village of about 7,000 residents ten kilometers from the coastal city of Baniyas. Around 1 p.m., the local opposition fighters retreated and pro-government forces entered the village and proceeded to search the houses. Over the next three hours, a familiar pattern repeated itself in most parts of al-Bayda: government and pro-government forces entered homes, separated men from women, rounded up the men of each neighborhood in one spot, and executed them by shooting them at close range. The next day, in a pattern closely resembling events in al-Bayda, witnesses told Human Rights Watch that after storming Ras al-Nabe^h, a neighborhood in Baniyas, government forces and pro-government militias executed dozens of residents.

Working with survivors, residents, and local activists, Human Rights Watch compiled a list of 248 individuals killed during the two days in the two towns. Based on witness accounts and video evidence reviewed, Human Rights Watch determined that the overwhelming majority were executed after the end of the military clashes in the villages and opposition fighters had retreated, making the killings in al-Bayda and Ras al-Nabe^h one of the deadliest instances of mass executions in Syria's increasingly bloody conflict.

Human Rights Watch called on the UN Security Council to ensure accountability for these crimes by referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and demanding that Syria cooperate fully with the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, including by giving it unrestricted access to al-Bayda and Baniyas.



(front cover) Pro-government forces stand in the main square of the town of al-Bayda on May 2, 2013 where residents were gathered and executed at close range. Syrian government forces and pro-government militias clashed with a group of opposition fighters earlier that day. Once the opposition fighters retreated, pro-government forces and militias rounded up many men in al-Bayda and executed them. Women and children were also executed.

© 2013 AP Worldwide



Screenshot from footage shows smoke rising from the town of al-Bayda on May 3, 2013. After the mass killings, pro-government forces burned and looted a number of homes and intentionally destroyed property. Much of the looting and burning happened on May 3, the day after the killings, when pro-government forces returned to al-Bayda.

Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEDQWW5iVKo>



Screenshot from footage shows pro-government forces and militias in the town of al-Bayda on May 2, 2013. The town is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Muslims with a small Christian minority and according to local witnesses, pro-government forces only killed and burned Sunni families and homes.

Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tYK8AAW1sY