SYRIAN ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

Syracuse University College of Law
What is the Syrian Accountability Project?

- Started at Syracuse University College of Law in 2011, The Syrian Accountability Project (SAP) is a cooperative effort between activists, Non-Governmental Organizations, students, and other interested parties to document war crimes and crimes against humanity in the context of the Syrian Crisis.

- Now in its third Phase, the project aims to produce impartial, high quality analysis of open source materials and to catalogue that information relative to applicable bodies of law; including the Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute, and Syrian Penal Law.
Who are SAP’s Partners?

- SAP has recently been re-designated as a “special project” under the Umbrella of the Law Journal “Impunity Watch” (IW) at Syracuse University College of Law. This will enable the project to continue as long as necessary, and when it is finished, IW’s good stewardship of our documents will ensure that Syracuse retains a strong Conflict Mapping capacity for the future.

- Additionally, as a member of the International Working Group on Syria, SAP works very closely with the organizations listed to the right.
Who are SAP’s Clients?

• Since the primary objective of SAP is to help secure justice for the Syrian people by providing date or use by a future justice mechanism for Syria, our clients and consumers are primarily like-minded Government and International Organizations.

• SAP has worked closely with the Syrian National Coalition and other activist organizations to ensure that our approach is consistent with distinctly Syrian notions of justice.

• The organizations to the right are our primary clients.
Objectives of the Syrian Accountability Project

• **Impartial documentation:**

  To provide the best open-source picture of the Syrian Conflict available by compiling and analyzing all relevant source material from an impartial stance and presenting data in a way which contributes to the reader’s understanding of both daily events and the conflict as a whole.

• **Representational charging:**

  To assist a future prosecution team in obtaining justice for the victims of the Syrian Conflict by providing resources that assist in the work of *representational charging*. While it is impossible to charge every crime that has been committed in a conflict this size, through representational charging we can ensure that each type of offense committed in each region is at least represented proportionally in the ultimate indictments. In so doing, we hope the Syrian people will be left with a sense that, even if every offense could not be charged, justice was still served through the scope of the indictments.
• The project organizes its work product in two main documents:

  • **Conflict Narrative**: Organized by month, date, and region, the Conflict Narrative recounts the situation on the ground in Syria as a series of events. The Conflict Narrative also includes information on key geopolitical developments relative to the major players in the conflict.

  • **Crime Base Matrix**: Organized relative to applicable statutory law, the Crime Base Matrix catalogues those events which represent violations of the Laws of War and Syrian Penal Law.
Sources for Incident Reports

• SAP has used a variety of sources throughout the project. Most recently we performed an in depth source review guided by our partners at No Peace Without Justice, to determine which sources allowed us to present the best picture of daily events on the ground in a way that presents the positions of all sides of the conflict: activists, rebels, and the regime.

• The sources in the figure to the right represent the results of that review. We believe each of them has a unique role to play in assisting us in presenting a complete and impartial picture of the conflict.
Sources for Geopolitical Developments

• Equally important to understanding the conflict are the positions of Syria’s neighbors and the International Community. As such, at the advice of *No Peace Without Justice* we have included several non-western news outlets in our source list.

• The sources to the right were chosen because they are English language news sources which accurately represent the position of Syria’s allies and neighbors.

• By relying on these sources, instead of western reproductions, we hope to demonstrate a good faith effort towards understanding the conflict in the terms of those most directly involved.
The formatting of our Conflict Narrative is designed to provide both general and specific information in a way that is easily accessible to the reader.

It is organized monthly, with a casualty count and Global Summary for each month, which presents the reader with the most consequential events from that time period.

The Global Summary section primarily relies on data from the Violations Documentation Center in Syria, because they present data based on confirmation from activists on the ground and they distinguish between civilian and non-civilian casualties with a high degree of specificity as to manner of death.

Global Summary: April 2013
According to the Violations Documentation Center in Syria, 5491 people were killed in Syria in the month of April. Of that number, 1277 were regime soldiers and 3764 were “martyrs” unaffiliated with the regime. The vast majority of those deaths, 461 on the Regime side and 3130 “martyrs”, were likely combat related, since the Violations Documentation Center reports their causes of death as either shooting, shelling or explosions. Additionally, reports say that 345 individuals unaffiliated with the regime were field executed, 276 were subjected to torture, and 16 died from “chemical or toxic gases.” Below is a summary of the most severe or consequential incidents from April 2013.

Key Incidents:
- Gas and Chemical attacks: Several gas and chemical attacks were reported in the month of April 2013: one in Aleppo on 13 April, allegedly carried out by the Syrian Air Force, killed two and injured sixteen. On 14 April, in the Damascus’s suburb of Nashabehi, 6 Syrians reportedly died due to “chemical shelling.” “Chemical Shelling” was also reported in the Jobar neighborhood in Damascus on 16 April.
- 13 April: Government forces allegedly seized various supply caches, originating from the United Arab Emirates, which were being smuggled from Lebanon into Syria near the village of Lefayaa.
- 15 April: Syrian government troops broke a six-month rebel blockade of a vital highway in northern Syria which had confined the army to the Wadi al Deif and Hamidiyah military bases in Idlib province.
- 17 April: The Free Syrian Army forces reportedly killed the commander of the Dabaa’s Military Airport in Homs, during a clash that left 20 members of the Shabiha militia and 10 members of Hezbollah dead.
- 19 April: 1. Shelling destroyed the “historic minaret of the Zeitouna Mosque” in Damascus.

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Following each monthly section are daily subsections which present the reader with a picture of what sort of incidents have been reported in each Governorate in Syria for each day. These daily sections represent the best understanding we can assemble from both confirmed and unconfirmed reports we have reviewed, and will be the subject of further analysis as the project continues.

To ensure our reports contain only useful information, we have developed a list of factors to guide us in determining what information to include. Accordingly, any reports detailing highly specific incident locations, unit and commander names, specific weapons used, especially egregious casualty counts or other information that will assist future investigators is automatically included.
Our Crime Base Matrix (CBM) serves as the raw material for such indictments as will eventually be drafted against those bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The data in the CBM is intended to demonstrate the frequency and scale of specific crimes in order to assist with the task of representational charging.

Rather than an absolute assertion of guilt, the CBM is better understood as a compilation of incidents presented relative to those sections of applicable law which we identified as most likely to apply to those incidents.
While SAP recently finished its Phase III work product, our project is far from concluded. The following are examples of work product which will be completed in the near future:

**Unit Mapping Projection:** Using Google Earth Pro, analysts from SAP’s Unit Mapping Team will be plotting incidents from our Conflict Mapping Narrative and relevant source reports from other monitoring groups onto a physical map of Syria with an eye toward establishing the movements of individual armed units throughout Syria. Using this information we will establish those commanders who bear the greatest responsibility for specific crimes.

**Sample Indictments:** Using the information from the Unit Mapping Projection, we will be drafting sample indictments charging those individuals who bear the greatest responsibility with applicable violations of both International and Syrian Domestic Law where appropriate.

**Research and Revision:** SAP’s research team will be working constantly to improve upon our data and update our Conflict Narrative and Crime Base Matrix as new and better source material becomes available.
The screenshot to the right is an example of an instance SAP was able to compile using google earth software and our Unit Mapping Projection Methodology developed this summer with input from No Peace Without Justice.

Here, SAP investigators were able to identify a flashpoint between rebel and regime forces by plotting 4 independently reported incidents from the same day onto a physical map. In so doing, we were able to paint a picture for consumers which was previously unrecognizable through the narrative and matrix alone.

Using this flashpoint system, SAP hopes to be able to connect thousands of independently reported incidents into related chains of events like this one, and in so doing, track the movements of individual armed units across the conflict.
• In addition to producing its own deliverables, SAP is proud to support the recently unveiled Chautauqua Blueprint.

• The Chautauqua Blueprint is a Draft Statute prepared by a panel of former international tribunal chief prosecutors, international judges, and leading experts which aims to provide a model for a Syrian Extraordinary Tribunal to Prosecute Atrocity Crimes. It reflects insights gained from a series of meetings and workshops over the past two years, which brought together Syrian lawyers, jurists, and civil society leaders with international experts to discuss an approach to transitional justice uniquely tailored to Syria.

• Given SAP’s efforts to document atrocity in Syria, SAP is naturally supportive of the Chautauqua Blueprint. SAP continues its work in hopes that our data will one day be used in a Syrian Extraordinary Tribunal, like the one proposed in the Chautauqua Blueprint, to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity.