

**Syria: Army Using New Type of Cluster Munition** Human Rights Watch January 14 2013

Syrian forces are using notoriously indiscriminate rockets that contain explosive submunitions. Evidence indicates that Syrian forces used BM-21 Grad multi-barrel rocket launchers to deliver cluster munitions in attacks near the city of Idlib in December 2012 and in Latamneh, a town northwest of Hama, on January 3, 2013.

These are the first known instances of Syrian use of ground-based cluster munitions. (...)

Based on interviews with witnesses, analysis of approximately a dozen videos posted online by local activists, and photographs taken by an international journalist, Human Rights Watch has concluded that since at least early December Syrian forces have used BM-21 Grad multi-barrel rocket launchers to deliver 122mm cluster munition rockets containing submunitions of the DPICM-type. (...)

The 122mm cluster munition rockets bear the markings of the Egyptian state-owned Arab Organization for Industrialization and an Egyptian company called Sakr Factory for Development Industries. (...)

These are the first recorded uses of the 122mm rockets containing DPICM submunitions in the Syrian conflict. In October and November, Human Rights Watch documented a country-wide increase in the use of Soviet-made RBK-250/275 AO-1SCh and RBK-250 PTAB-2.5 cluster bombs delivered by Syrian aircraft.(...)

A resident of Latamneh described to Human Rights Watch the cluster munition strike on January 3 on his town, located northwest of Hama city. (...)

The resident told Human Rights Watch that al Kharouf was not a combatant. The resident said and graphic video footage shows that a 30-year-old man named Ala` Othman Zain, also identified as a civilian, was killed after the strike when he picked up a submunition that exploded in his hands. Video footage apparently shot in a local medical facility on the day of the strike shows a dead man with his right hand blown off and wounded civilians receiving treatment, including a baby, a young girl, boys, women, and men. (...)

The resident said that the Syrian Army has not been in Latamneh, but that the Free Syrian Army has been present since mid-December. The resident said that the town has been attacked by Syrian government planes and helicopters, but that the attack on January 3 was different because, "This was the first time this kind of rocket is used on us." He said that the rockets were not dropped from an airplane: "There was no airplane that day. It was very foggy even after the rain stopped. The rocket came from the direction of Hama airport, located 40 km away from our town."

Another resident told Human Rights Watch that Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters in Latamneh told him that FSA fighters near Hama airport had informed them that the rockets were launched from the vicinity of the airport on January 3.(...)

Other videos uploaded to YouTube show remnants of the rocket and submunitions apparently used at Latamneh, including one video of a field pockmarked by small craters with several unexploded submunitions visible and another video showing unexploded submunitions in a residential area.(...)

On December 12, an international journalist visited an uninhabited forested area outside the village of Banin in Jabal al-Zaweya, where she photographed cluster munition remnants and the remnants of ground-launched rockets used in an attack on December 5. A local FSA representative informed the journalist that while no one was injured or killed during the cluster munition attack, an FSA member named Ahmed Mohamed Khalifa was killed on December 5 when he carried an unexploded submunition to his car. (...)

Video footage shows people handling remnants of the 122mm rockets and unexploded DPICM submunitions, an extremely dangerous activity. The design of the fuze system in this type of submunition makes it very sensitive and submunitions that fail to explode on initial impact are liable to detonate if disturbed. The first Latamneh resident interviewed by Human Rights Watch said, “We distributed documents explaining to people not to touch the bomblets if they find one. We also reiterated this message during prayer time in mosques.”

More than 15 governments have condemned Syria’s use of cluster munitions, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Qatar, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.(...)

Human Rights Watch is a founding member of the international Cluster Munition Coalition, the civil society campaign behind the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

**Read the full report** [here](#) .