



Syria Civil Defense
The White Helmets

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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Acronyms

Internally Displaced Persons	IDPs
Explosive Remnants of War	ERW
International Non-Governmental Organization	INGO
Non-governmental Organization	NGO
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons	OPCW
Small arms and light weapons	SALW
Syrian Democratic Forces	SDF
Syria Civil Defense	SCD
Visual Warning System	VWS
White Helmets	WH
United Nations	UN
United Nations Security Council	UNSC
Unexploded Ordnance	UXO
Civil Society Organizations	CSOs

▶ INTRODUCTION

The year 2023 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Syrians, as the suffering multiplied due to the devastating earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria on February 6. This resulted in the death and injury of thousands of Syrians, displacing tens of thousands, joining nearly two million displaced people residing in camps and shelters in northwest Syria.

The suffering of Syrians in northwest Syria persisted, both in residential areas and crowded makeshift camps, due to resource scarcity and the deterioration of infrastructure, coinciding with a shortage of humanitarian aid.

The earthquake posed an additional challenge for the White Helmets volunteers (WH) who continued providing essential services, including emergency services, search and rescue, and responding to almost daily ceasefire violations. Through the effective utilization of resources, expertise, and equipment, the White Helmets actively participated in the earthquake response and made a significant contribution to the infrastructure projects in the earthquake recovery phase, given the urgent need in northwest Syria. White Helmets spared no effort to save and facilitate the lives of civilians, restore livelihoods to affected communities, and address the challenges they faced.

Despite security and logistical challenges, the White Helmets volunteers persisted in their humanitarian response, extending assistance to those in need within accessible areas in Syria. Their commitment to the principles of humanity, solidarity, and impartiality, as outlined in international humanitarian law, remained steadfast. Volunteer teams continued to deliver essential services, undertaking tasks such as removing unexploded ordnance and conducting awareness campaigns, thereby making a significant impact on the lives of millions of people affected by the earthquake and ongoing crises in the region.

▶ Earthquake Response

The earthquake caused significant losses in lives and property, affecting various aspects of life, including housing, education, health, and services. Its impact extended to tens of thousands of families who, in the aftermath of the prolonged humanitarian crisis, lost their homes. This disaster exacerbated the negative effects of years of displacement and migration in the region, where nearly two million people currently reside in displacement camps.

The General Directorate of the White Helmets announced the general alert after the earthquake at the dawn of February 6, 2023, as it summoned all teams and volunteers to respond directly and urgently to the calls of citizens and requests for assistance that were sent to the White Helmets centers that spread over all the areas covered by our teams in northwest Syria.

The White Helmets have been working according to a three-phase plan of action to respond to the earthquake.



PHASE ONE: SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS FOR THOSE TRAPPED UNDER THE RUBBLE

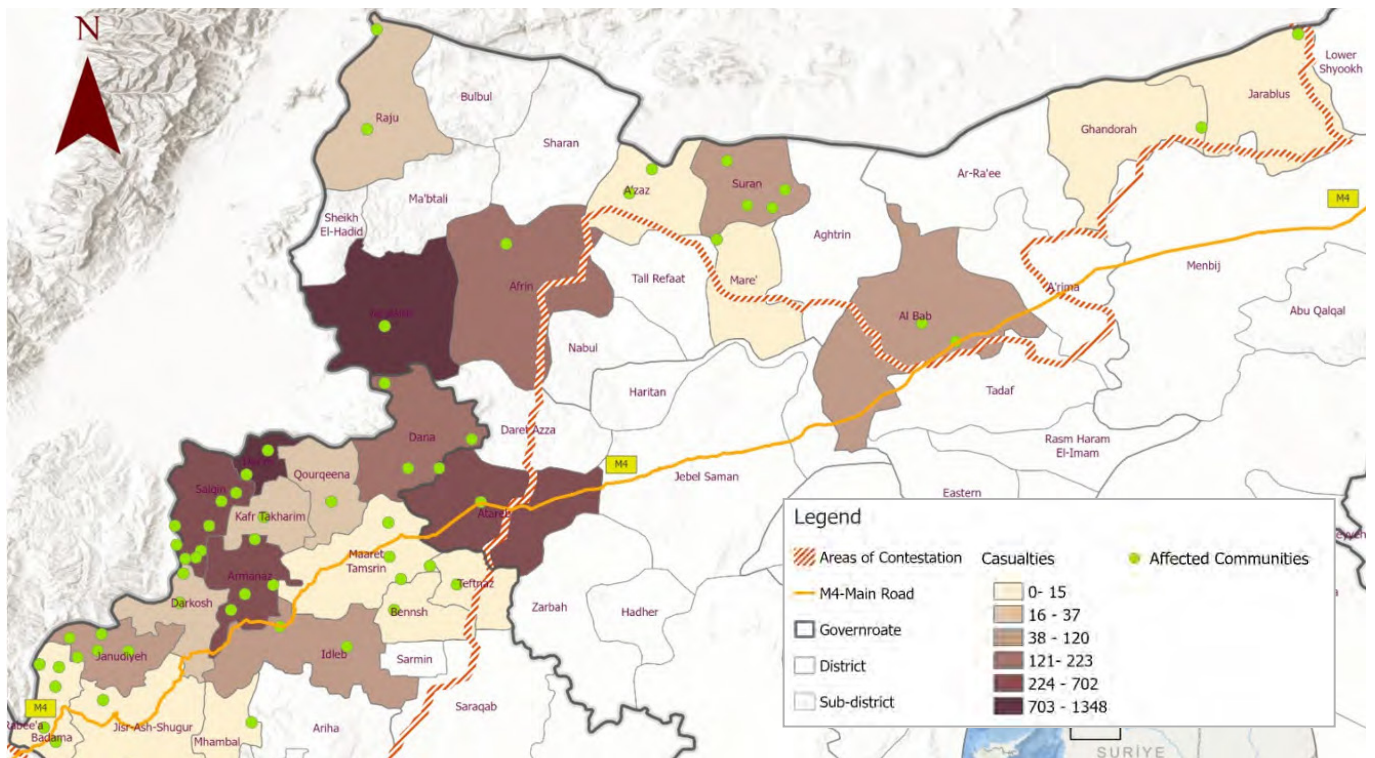
White Helmets volunteers rescued

2,950

people from under the rubble

The first phase of the earthquake response focused on search and rescue operations, with White Helmets teams arriving at the sites of operations shortly after the earthquake occurred. They quickly began search and rescue efforts in a wide geographical area that included 182 sites within 60 communities. Through their tireless efforts, White Helmets volunteers rescued 2,950 people from under the rubble, while also recovering the bodies of 2,172 earthquake victims.

Map: The areas where WH search and rescue teams responded, and the number of people they pulled from under the rubble



The White Helmets volunteers also provided aid during two subsequent earthquakes in Hatay, Turkey on February 20th that were felt by people in northwest Syria. Ambulance teams from the White Helmets transported more than 130 people suffering from fractures, bruises, fainting, fear, and panic caused by the earthquakes. The two earthquakes also caused the collapse of several cracked walls and buildings in the areas previously affected by the earthquake.

More than 3,000 White Helmets cadres, including 2,500 volunteers, 300 female volunteers, and 200 administrative employees participated in these operations. Heavy machinery and necessary equipment were fully mobilized, and additional machinery was rented from local markets.

Civilian contributions enhanced the capacity of WH volunteers to better respond considering the international shortfall and the delay in the arrival of international aid, which was supposed to arrive after the disaster.

PHASE TWO: OPENING ROADS AND REMOVING UNSTABLE STRUCTURES TO ENSURE CIVILIAN SAFETY

After completing the search and rescue operations, White Helmets teams immediately began the second phase of their response to the earthquake disaster in northwest Syria. During this stage, the teams focused on opening roads and demolishing unstable structures, including walls and ceilings, to ensure the safety of civilians and facilitate emergency response operations and aid delivery to those affected by the earthquake.

PHASE THREE: RECOVERY, AND REHABILITATION

On March 9, White Helmets announced the start of the rubble removal phase on a wide geographical scale that includes all the affected cities and towns in northwest Syria, which is a crucial step in helping affected communities recover from the devastation left by the earthquake, and contributes to repairing basic infrastructure, buildings, and damaged public facilities in an attempt to restore life to the affected areas and facilitate the return of civilians.

Recycling Debris:

Managing debris is essential for maintaining public health, reducing environmental impact, and improving the quality of life for civilians. The White Helmets developed a comprehensive plan to handle debris, addressing the massive quantities at various stages, aiming to use recycled materials in road rehabilitation projects, landfill operations throughout 2024.



Section One:

Community Resilience Activities

This section includes the White Helmets' operations executed as part of the humanitarian response projects in the WASH sector, aimed at bolstering local community resilience. It also covers other logistical activities supporting public facilities.



In this context, the volunteers conducted 24,368 community resilience activity across 694 communities and 845 camps in northwest Syria during 2023.


Earthquake response operations topped, including debris removal, road opening, demolition of cubic crumbling walls and ceilings, ensuring the safety of civilians, and to facilitate emergency response operations. In addition to general logistic services included assisting in establishing temporary camps and collective shelters for earthquake victims, as well as preparing and implementing humanitarian response WASH projects.

During 2023, The White Helmets volunteers:

Opened roads totaling

885,781 meters

within 335 communities and 119 camps



Leveled and facilitated roads, lands, and camps covering an area of

887,146 square meters


within 396 communities and 503 camps



Demolished roofs and walls totaling

30,034 cubic meters

within 125 communities to protect civilians from risks resulting from the collapse of roofs and walls in damaged buildings, public facilities, and schools.



Removed

442,004

cubic meters

of debris within
162 communities.



The teams also intensified response efforts, clearing waterways, digging sewage networks removing garbage dumps, and filling water tanks, to avoid a health catastrophe as hundreds of camps and dozens of villages and towns in northwest Syria are suffering from a severe shortage of sewage networks, especially after the earthquake that caused extensive damage to the already weak infrastructure, and the proliferation of open garbage dumps provides a breeding ground for disease-carrying insects and epidemics.



The volunteers carried out 2,088 washing operations, including schools, streets, and public facilities. Additionally, they executed 1,481 various digging operations, including technical trenches and foundations, 1,171 sewage line networks, 1,072 miscellaneous filling operations, including filling of holes and abandoned wells, 909 waste disposal operations, and 841 rehabilitation operations, involving schools and public facilities.

White Helmets volunteers also responded to various weather disturbances, including storms and rainfall, which exacerbated the suffering of thousands of affected families and caused damage in dozens of camps. They opened 476 opening waterways and drainage channels in 170 communities and 136 camps. They also carried out 170 operations to install barriers preventing floodwaters from reaching camps in 72 communities and 61 camps. They also reopened roads closed by floods, assisted in water drainage from flooded homes, as they executed 26 water suction operations, and conducted 987 vehicle towing operations within 263 communities and 61 camps.

No. of community resilience operations conducted in camps and villages in 2023

Operation	No of Camps	No of Villages	No of Operations
Ground leveling and graveling	503	396	5234
Opening roads	119	335	2226
Logistical and community services	158	295	2202
Interior and exterior washing services	47	378	2088
Debris removal	12	162	1809
Digging (graves - technical holes - foundations - electrical maintenance)	187	268	1481
Digging sewage networks	193	218	1171
Backfilling (holes, abandoned wells)	143	278	1168
Vehicle towing services	61	263	987
Managing waste inside landfill sites	65	198	909
Rehabilitation works for schools, centers, and public facilities	8	100	841
Demolitions work for ceilings, windows, doors, walls.	11	125	754
Electrical works (crane-maintenance-replacement)	29	121	686
Water supply	19	70	506
Opening waterways	136	170	476
Digging drinking water networks	17	97	350
Exam logistical services		48	343
Spray insecticides	14	92	324
Planting trees	6	71	253
Raising earth mounds for rainwater and floods	61	72	170
Equipping camps with rapid response materials	58	49	142
Animal rescue	3	66	124
Burial	2	41	88
Water suction	6	17	26
Preparation Of Shelters	1	6	7
Disinfection		2	4
Grand Total	845	694	24368

Map2: No. of community resilience operations by community during 2023

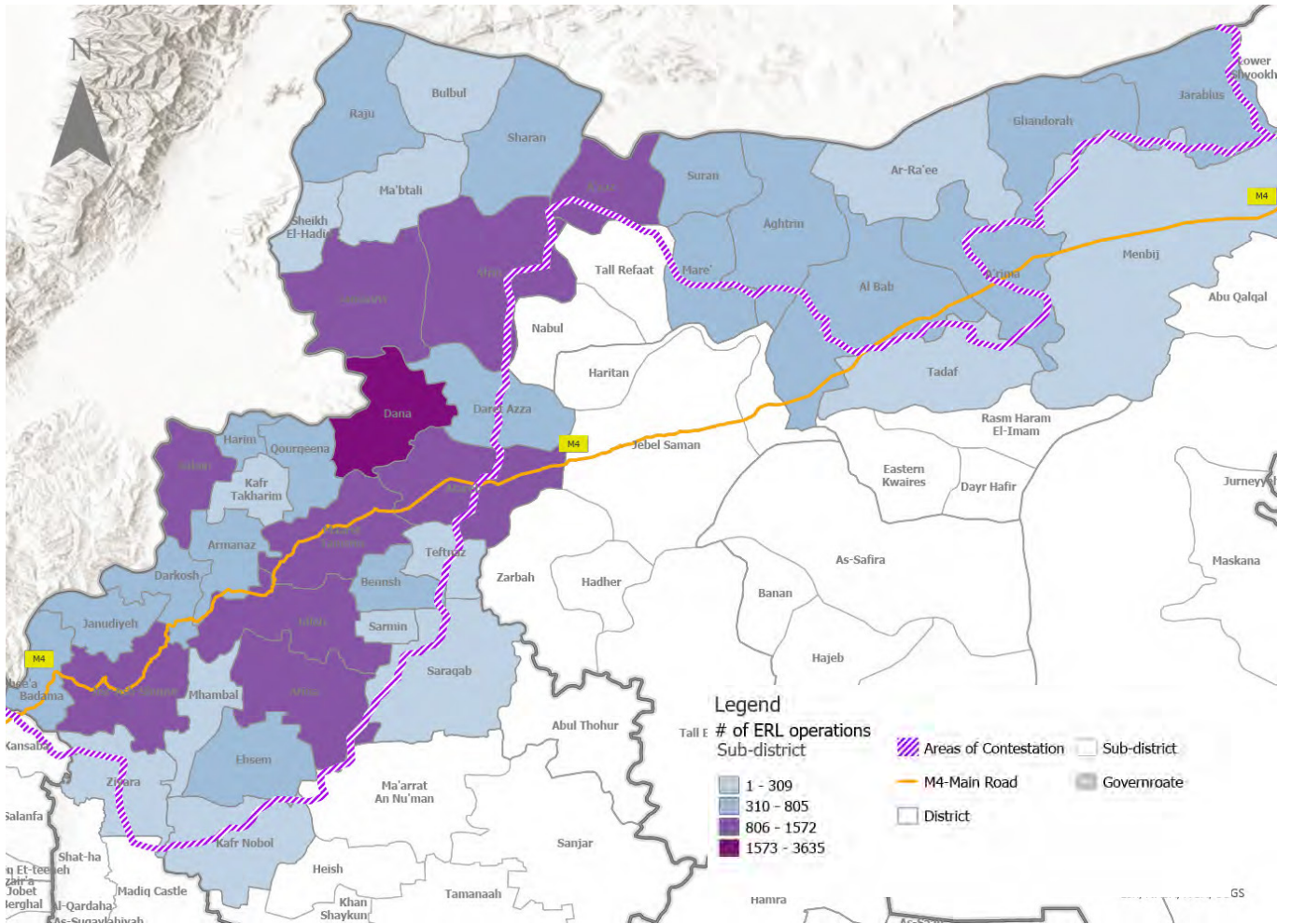


Figure1: Distribution of community resilience by location

Road	39%	10190
Camp	15%	4010
Home	12%	3048
School	8%	2004
Field	5%	1380
Public Building	5%	1198
Mosque	3%	885
Cemetery	3%	793
Hospital	2%	498
Landfills	1%	377
Park	1%	343
Souk	1%	194
Medical Facility	1%	148
Water filling station	1%	143

▶ Earthquake Recovery Projects

The White Helmets has implemented several infrastructure projects as part of an action plan to alleviate the suffering of civilians and facilitate the provision of shelter for those affected by the earthquake. These projects were carried out in the framework of recovery and rehabilitation operations for affected communities, in cooperation and coordination with organizations and entities operating in northwest Syria.

Roads Rehabilitation:

The volunteers contributed to improving the road infrastructure, which helped improve access to education, healthcare, and other essential services.

WH volunteers have rehabilitated and paved roads with a total length of

30,000 Meters

benefiting 800,000 people.

Rehabilitation and asphaltting of roads in the town of Sarmada with a total length of 5,050 meters, which improved access to essential services for 136,000 people in Sarmada and 48 surrounding camps.



Rehabilitation and asphaltting of roads in Afrin (Afrin-Kafr-Jannah Road with a length of 9,500 meters and Jisr Afrin Third Road with a length of 1,650 meters). These two roads serve 108,000 people in 14 communities and 34 camps.



Paving the Ain al-Bayda al-Qandariyah road in Jarabulus in Aleppo Governorate, with a total length of 8500 meters, serving 10,000 people in 12 communities and camps.



Rehabilitating the western entrance of Idlib city with a total length of 1400 meters, used by 257,000 people in two communities and 13 camps. Works included paving, painting, landscaping, and lighting, aiming to organize traffic, reduce traffic violations and accidents, and provide an aesthetic appearance.



Rehabilitating the road leading to the entrance of the National Hospital in the city of Azaz with a length of 140 meters, serving 117,000 people in two communities and 16 camps.



Rehabilitating Zakki Al-Arsouzi Street in Jisr al-Shughour with a length of 235 meters, serving 29,000 people. The works included maintaining rainwater drains, cleaning stormwater drainage channels, installing colored interlocking tiles, planting trees, and installing solar lighting poles.

Rehabilitating and asphaltting the road from Sarmada to Kafr Daryan with a total length of 3310 meters, used by 176,000 people in four communities and four camps in collaboration with the Sham Foundation.

Contributing to community support operations and supporting the educational process:

- Rehabilitating a school in Mare'.
- Rehabilitating the Free Aleppo University.
- Rehabilitating the Public Services Building in Suran.
- Rehabilitating the Women and Family Center in Jisr al-Shughour.
- Rehabilitating 44 White Helmets centers.
- Constructing the Mland Mosque.
- Rehabilitating the Jacobite Church.
- Rehabilitating the earthquake-damaged Faculty of Education in Afrin.



WASH Sector:

Rehabilitating the drinking water network with a length of 45,246 meters and sewage networks with a length of 81,514 meters in Kafr Karmin - Al-Kamuna in Aleppo western countryside. These networks meet the needs of approximately 7,000 shelters provided for those affected by the earthquake, covering an area of 200,000 square meters.



Rehabilitating sewage networks with a length of 3,050 meters in the Babka community.

Rehabilitating sewage networks with a length of 1,650 meters in the Bardakli community.

Rehabilitating sewage networks with a length of 500 meters in the Bennesh community.

Rehabilitating sewage networks with a length of 2,100 meters in the Hawar Al-Nahr community.



White Helmets volunteers filled several unused dry wells to protect civilians, especially children, from falling into them.



Section Two: Search and Rescue Program

Response to Military Attacks

Military attacks by the Syrian regime and its allies persisted. White Helmets volunteers responded to 1,322 military attacks within 189 communities. The intensity of military attacks increased starting from August, with September and October witnessing the highest number of attacks (533 attacks). Syrian regime forces were responsible for 84% of the attacks, Russian forces for 6%, areas controlled by Syrian regime and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) accounted for 4%, and SDF were responsible for 1%. Whereas the source of 5% of the attacks remained unknown.



1,322

military attacks within 189 communities



Figure 2: Military attacks according to the attacking party

Syrian regime forces	84%	1115
Russian forces	6%	75
Anonymous	5%	64
Areas controlled by syrian regime and SDF	4%	51
Syrian Democratic Forces(SDF)	1%	17

Military Attacks by the Targeted Location:

The village of Fetireh witnessed the highest number of attacks (217), followed by the village of Kansafra (132 attacks), and then the village of Al-Bara (104 attacks). Additionally, the city of Idlib experienced 45 attacks, with 39 of them carried out by the Syrian regime forces.

The systematic targeting of densely populated areas, particularly Idlib, with its approximately half-million inhabitants, has been a major cause of new waves of displacement for citizens who thought they had settled in relatively safe places in previous years.

The evidence suggests that the attacks aimed to cause the highest number of casualties among civilians by targeting various civilian facilities. Over 53% of attacks targeted agricultural fields, potentially impacting food production for thousands. Another major target was civilian homes (32%), displacing residents and causing injuries. Attacks also hit essential facilities like schools, hospitals, and markets, further hindering access to crucial services for civilians.

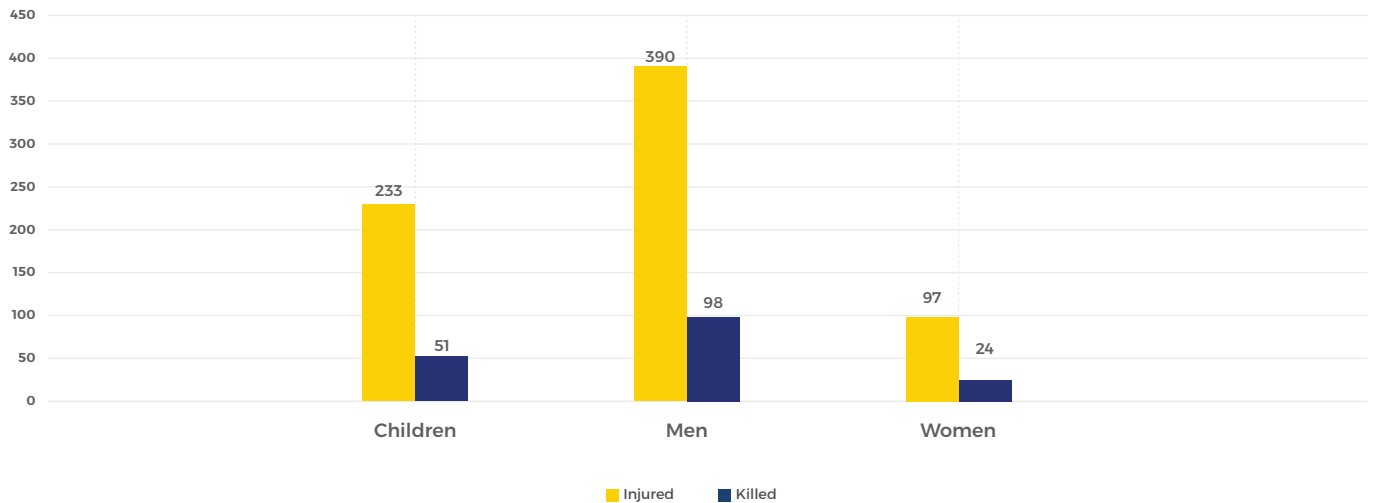
Figure 3: Military attacks by targeted location

Field	53%	706
Home	32%	421
Road	5%	70
School	2%	29
Camp	1%	17
Souk	1%	14
Forest	1%	13
Mosque	1%	12
Public Building	1%	8

Civilian Casualties Due to Military Attacks

In the context of their response to the military attacks in northwest Syria, White Helmets volunteers recovered the bodies of 173 deceased individuals, including 24 women and 51 children during their response to military attacks. They also rescued 720 injured persons, including 97 women and 233 children. The volunteers faced significant challenges in their movements due to monitoring of target locations by reconnaissance aircraft and the fear of renewed airstrikes or double-tap attacks, especially when there were casualties under the rubble. It's worth noting that the volunteers received specific training on supporting the injured, especially women, children, and individuals with special needs.

Figure 4: Civilian casualties during responses to military attacks



Massacres

White Helmets volunteers responded to eight massacres, recovering the bodies of 50 deceased individuals, and assisting 77 wounded persons. Syrian regime forces committed four of these massacres, while Russian forces were responsible for three.

Military Attacks by the Weapon Used

Artillery shelling constituted the highest percentage of attacks at 73%, followed by rocket launcher attacks at 13%, while aerial bombardments accounted for 6% of the attacks.

Figure 5: Military attacks by the type of weapon used

Weapon Type	Percentage	Count
Artillery Shelling	73%	968
Rocket Launcher	13%	175
Airstrike	6%	76
Anti-tank guided missile	1%	18
An Unknown Explosion	1%	17
Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)	1%	13
Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)	1%	9
SALW	1%	9
Incendiary Weapons	1%	9
Land Mine	1%	7
Drone	1%	7

Attacks on White Helmets Centers and Teams:

During its military campaign in October, the Syrian regime forces targeted four White Helmets centers. On October 5, they targeted the White Helmets Center in Ariha. On October 8, they targeted the White Helmets Centers in Daret Izza, Idlib City, and the Women and Family Center in the town of Sarmin. No volunteers were injured in these attacks.

On July 11, a White Helmets team was targeted while responding to artillery shelling. This resulted in the martyrdom of team leader Abdul Basit Abdul Khaleq and the complete destruction of the pick-up being used in the response.

Martyrs, Deceased, and Injured White Helmets Volunteers:

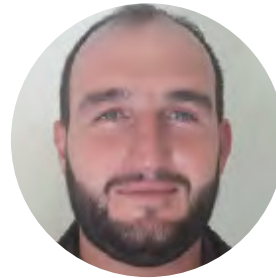
The White Helmets mourned the loss of ten volunteers during 2023, bringing the total number of martyrs and deceased volunteers to 308. The volunteers Mahmoud Sharif, Khalil Tokaj, Daif Al-Shaker, and Fatima Al-Hasan died as a result of the earthquake on February 6. The volunteers Mustafa Hassan, Yasser Al-Omar, Fahad Junaid Al-Ali, and Abdo Abdul Salam Al-Khatib died due to illness. While the volunteer Abdul Basit Ahmed Abdul Khaleq was martyred when his team was targeted on July 11. Also, the volunteer Muhannad Saloum Al-Abd died in a car accident on September 14. Other volunteers were also injured while responding to search and rescue operations.



Fatima Al-Hasan



Khalil Tokaj



Mahmoud Sharif



Yasser Al-Omar



Abdul Basit Abdul Khaleq



Muhannad Saloum Al-Abd



Fahd Junaid Al-Ali



Abdo Abdel-Salam Al-Khatib



Mustafa Hassan



Daif Al-Shakir

Emergency Response to Incidents

Firefighting Operations:

WH volunteers extinguished 2,760 fires

Firefighting is considered one of the fundamental activities of the White Helmets centers in northwest Syria. Specialized firefighting teams extinguish fires in accordance with standard procedures, utilizing available resources to preserve the lives of civilians and their properties.



WH firefighters extinguished 2,760 fires during 2023. June recorded the highest number of fires with 564 fires, followed by July with 458 fires. Most fires, 28%, occurred in agricultural fields, while 27% erupted in civilian homes. Additionally, 9% of the fires occurred on roads, 7% in camps, 6% in forests, 5% in shops, and 4% in makeshift fuel refineries.

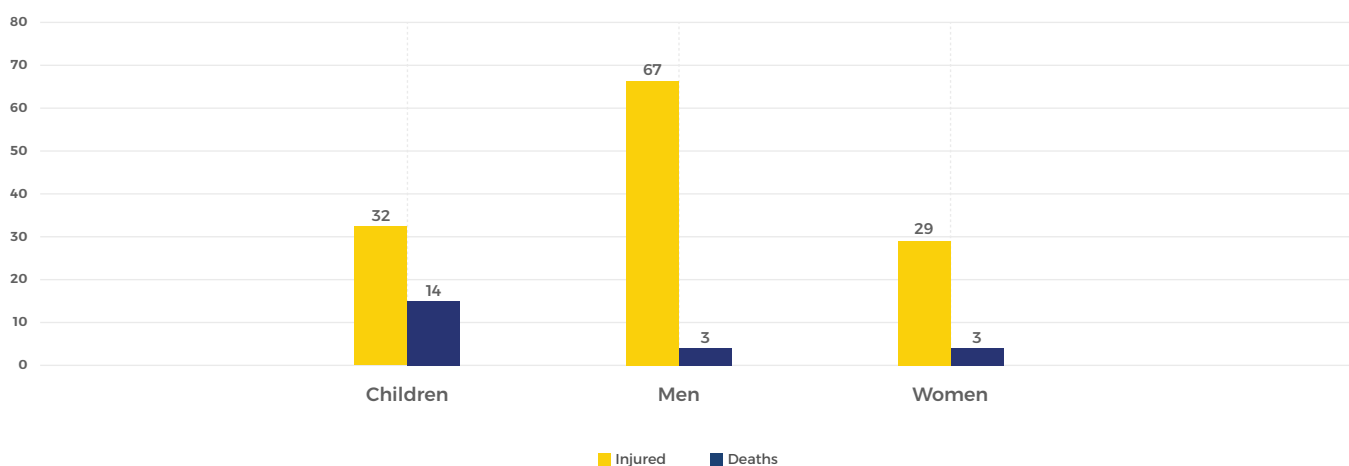
Figure 6: Firefighting operations by location of the fire

Field	28%	760
Home	27%	744
RRoad	9%	237
Camp	7%	206
Forest	6%	175
Store	5%	134
Makeshift refinery	4%	115
Landfills	3%	73
Public building	2%	46
Cemetety	2%	45
Factory	1%	35
Park	1%	31
Fuel Station	1%	25
Souk	1%	22
School	1%	19
Food warehouse	1%	19
Bakery	1%	10

Firefighting operations covered 417 communities and 147 camps. During these operations, the volunteers rescued 128 injured individuals, including 29 women and 32 children. The fires also claimed the life of 20 people, including three women and 14 children.

Sixty-nine percent of the fires were attributed to unknown causes, while 13% resulted from electrical faults, 12% from fuel leaks, and 5% from gas leaks.

Figure 7: No. of people rescued during firefighting operations

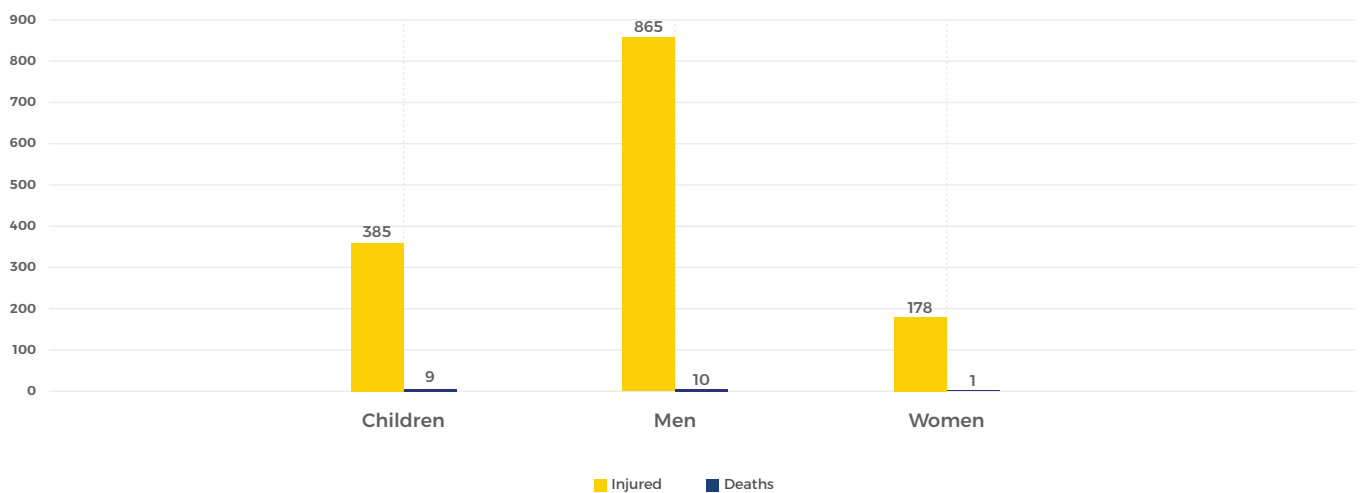


Response to Traffic Accidents:

The year 2023 witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of traffic accidents, often resulting from road deterioration and a decrease in road safety standards. White Helmets teams continuously raise awareness and take measures to minimize the occurrence of these accidents.

The volunteers responded to 1,554 traffic accidents during the year, aiding 1,428 injured individuals, including 178 women and 385 children. Unfortunately, these accidents resulted in the death of 20 individuals who succumbed to injuries sustained in traffic accidents, including one woman and nine children.

Figure 8: No. of people rescued during traffic accident response operations



Motorcycle accidents accounted for the highest percentage of accidents recorded at 46%, followed by car accidents at 31%, while trucks and heavy machinery accidents accounted for 15%.

The causes of traffic accidents were varied. Excessive speed topped the list at 29%, followed by sudden vehicle breakdowns at 13%, road obstacles at 11%, narrow roads at 9%, and unsafe overtaking at 6%.

Evacuation Operations

White Helmets volunteers evacuated 1,623 people towards relatively safe villages and camps during 181 evacuation operations, mostly in October due to the fierce military campaign launched by the Syrian regime forces and their allies.

Response to Drowning Incidents:

For the second year in a row, the deployment of White Helmets' water rescue teams around Midanki Lake and Ain Al-Zarqa has contributed to reducing the number of drowning cases there. During the summer months, diving teams set up advanced points throughout the day to protect civilians from drowning and to quickly respond to any distress calls. These points monitored the water bodies, and responded immediately and directly to any incidents that may occur, emphasizing that these water bodies are dangerous and not suitable for swimming.

During this year's response operations, the volunteers rescued 115 people from drowning, including seven women and 61 children, and recovered 44 bodies from drowning incidents, including one woman and 26 children.

Section Three: Health Services

Ambulance Services:

White Helmets teams provide ambulance services through an integrated system that attends to patients, emergencies, accident victims, and civilians affected by military attacks. The White Helmets teams also provide transportation services for kidney dialysis patients from their homes to dialysis centers in northwest Syria.

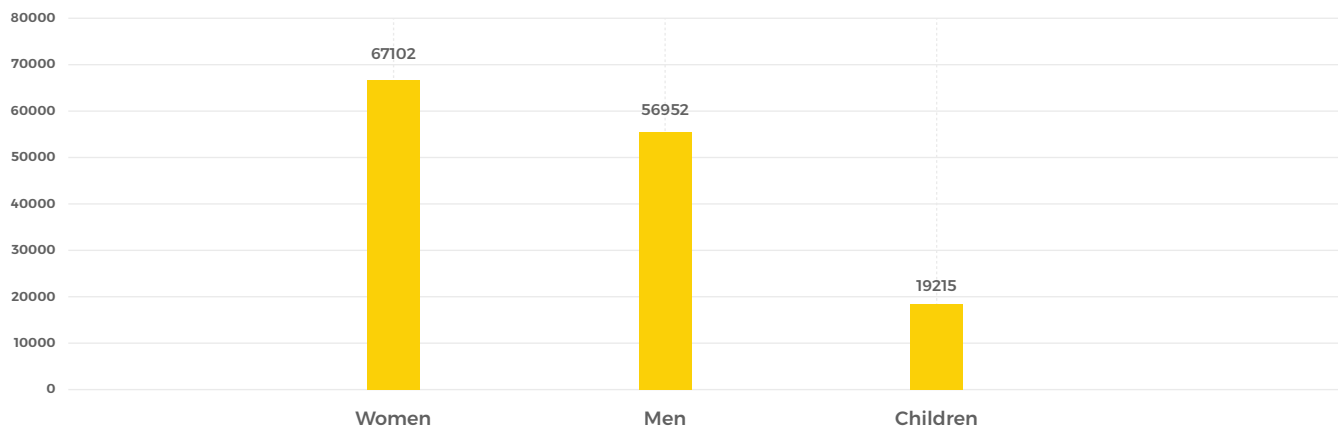
Ambulance response teams coordinate with search and rescue, and firefighting sectors in emergencies to ensure service integration, enhance effectiveness, and prioritize safety measures for life-saving. They also coordinate with active health authorities to improve responses and contribute to a more efficient healthcare system. Ambulance teams focus on continuous training and rehabilitation to elevate the proficiency of responders, emphasizing the safety of patients and injured individuals for optimal outcomes in emergency interventions.



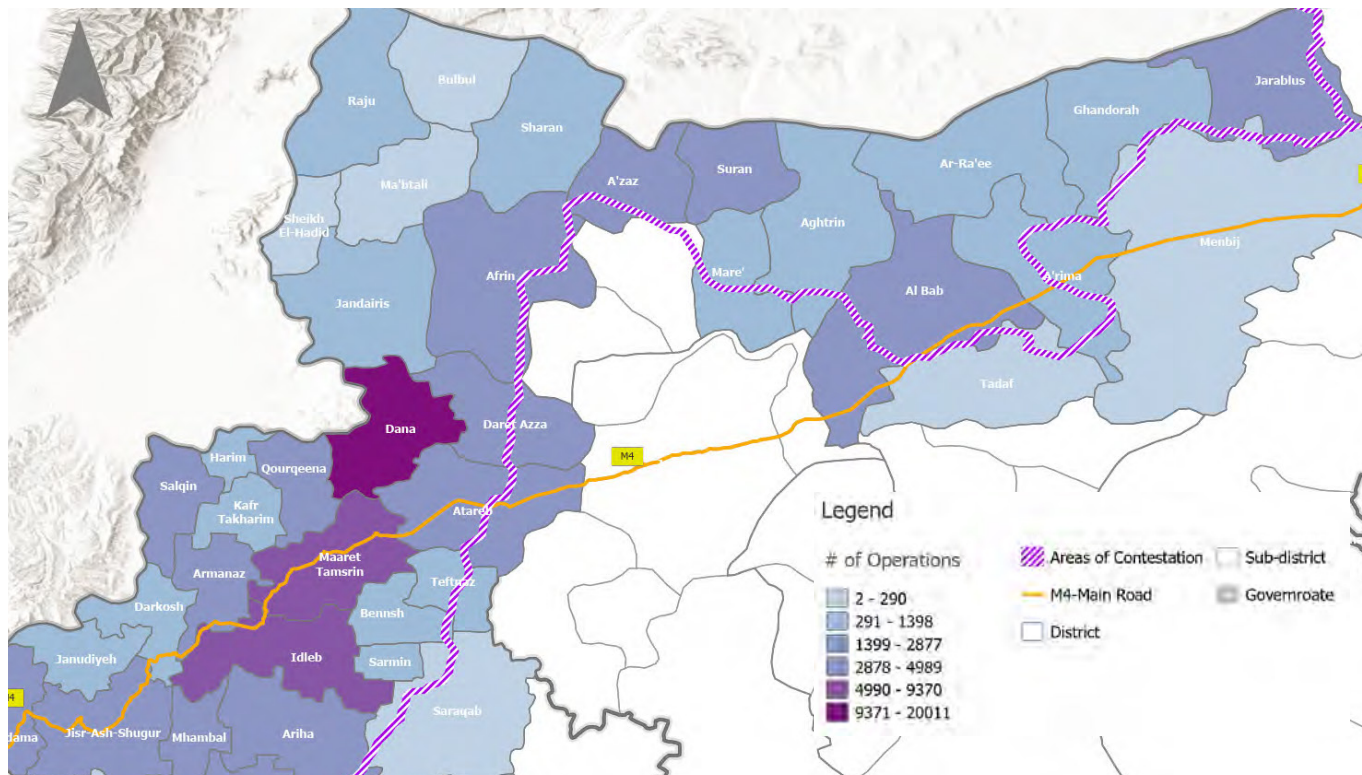
In 2023, the White Helmets bolstered its ambulance fleet by adding 23 new ambulances. WH also activated a safe transportation service for newborns through six neonatal intensive care ambulances. Additionally, 98 male and female volunteers completed a paramedic diploma training.

The WH signed an MoU with the Central Ambulance and Referral System, along with MoUs with several partners to provide first aid training for their teams. The total number of beneficiaries of the services provided by the ambulance system reached 143,269 individuals, including 67,102 women and 19,215 children, within 660 communities and 1,162 camps in northwest Syria.

Figure 9: No. of beneficiaries from ambulance services



Map 3: Ambulance services according to Sub-district in 2023



In the realm of diagnostics, internal emergencies led the ambulance operations, totaling 27,052 procedures. The volunteers undertook 17,303 operations of safely returning patients home post-treatment. Furthermore, 8,279 operations were dedicated to the transfer of injured and wounded individuals. Additionally, 5,808 operations involved the transportation of women in childbirth, while 5,459 operations focused on transferring patients undergoing various surgical procedures. The volunteers also continued to transport patients and those in need of continuous medical care, such as kidney failure patients requiring dialysis, ensuring their return home. The volunteers carried out 11,686 operations of transporting kidney dialysis patients, and 6,740 operations of returning kidney dialysis and thalassemia patients and those receiving physical therapy to their homes after treatment.

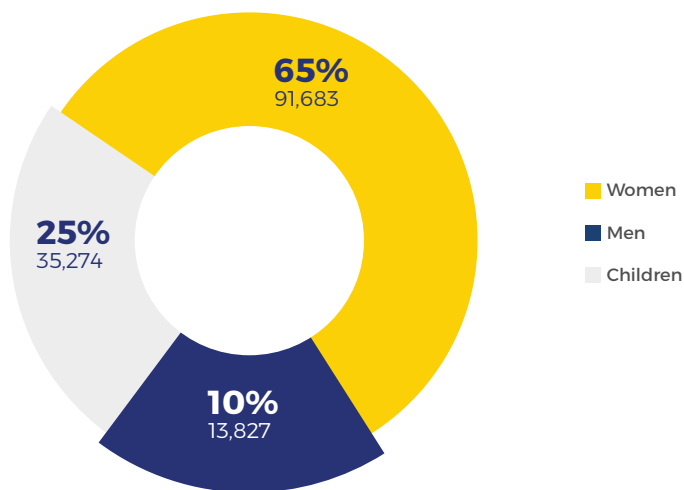
Health Services for Women and Family Centers:

The White Helmets provide primary health services in their operational areas through 39 Women and Family Centers. These centers offer services in a variety of areas, including reproductive health services, psychosocial support, nursing and dressing services, in addition to ambulance and referral services, and physiotherapy. In addition to awareness activities, particularly for vulnerable populations inside and outside the centers.

Shift systems were activated for women's ambulance services to operate 24/7 in most Women and Family Centers to enhance the services, meeting community needs. Female volunteers handle emergency cases, medical interventions, transportation to hospitals and medical centers, supporting the ambulance system within the organization.

The total number of beneficiaries from the check-ups and health consultations provided by these centers during the year reached 140,784 individuals, including 91,683 women and 35,274 children.

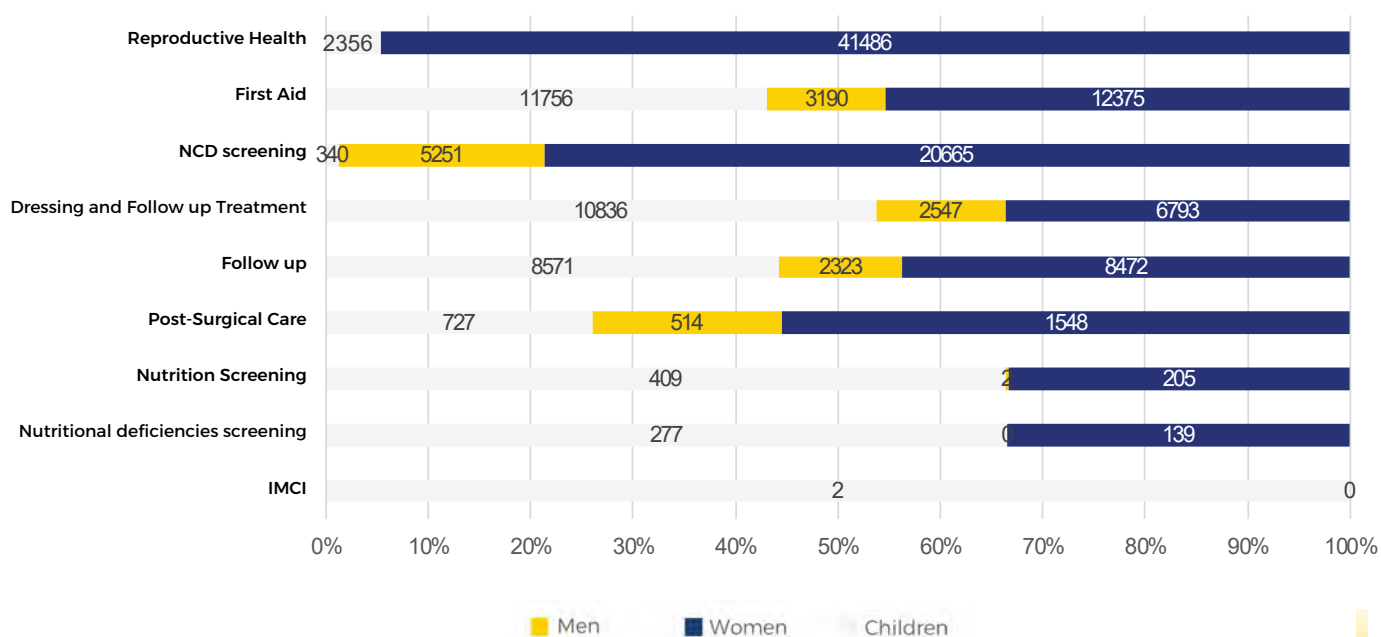
Figure 10: No. of beneficiaries of Women and Family Centers





As for diagnostic services, reproductive health services constituted the highest service provision, reaching 43,842 women, including 2,356 under the age of 18. Additionally, 27,321 patients benefited, including 12,375 women and 11,756 children, from first aid services. Chronic disease screening covered 26,256 patients, among them 20,665 women and 340 children. Moreover, 20,176 individuals, including 6,793 women and 10,836 children, benefited from the dressing and treatment follow-up service.

Figure 11: No. of beneficiaries from medical interventions provided by Women and Family Centers according to disease

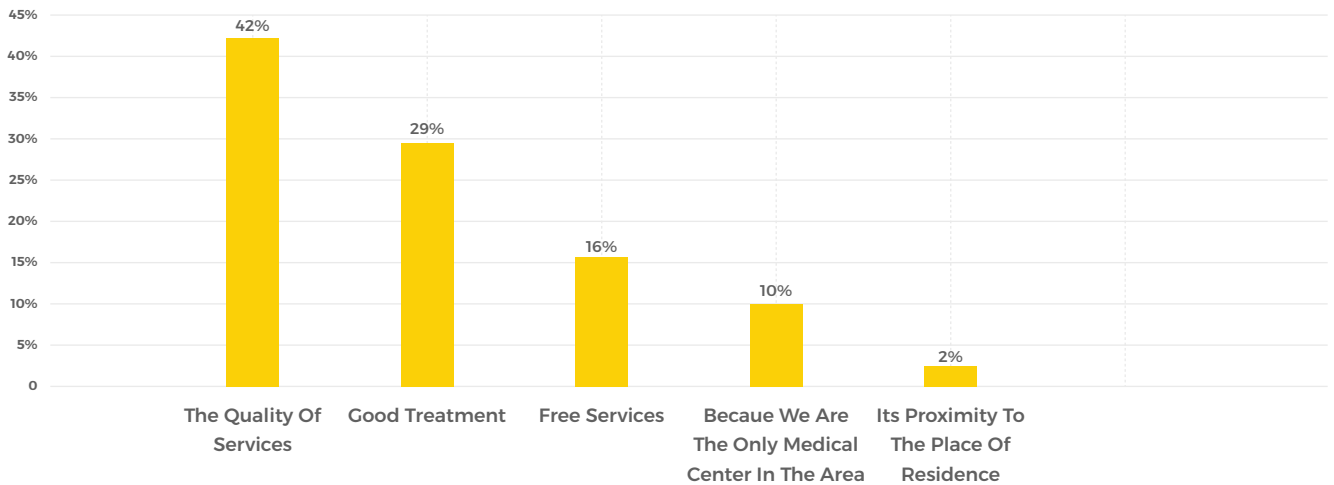


Eighty-nine percent of health examinations were provided within Women and Family Centers, while 11% were provided outside the Centers, either within camps as a part of the periodic visits by the volunteers to assist patients unable to reach the Centers, or in patients' homes for the elderly and those with mobility challenges, including dialysis patients.

The Women and Family Centers surveyed their beneficiaries to measure satisfaction with the health services provided, aiming to continually improve their service delivery mechanisms.

The results showed that the main reason for choosing the centers was the quality of services provided, accounting for 42 %, followed by the good treatment received by beneficiaries from the female staff at these centers, accounting for 29%. Other reasons included the centers' services being free, and the center being the only medical point in the area, as well as its proximity to the place of residence.

Figure 12: Reasons for beneficiaries coming to Women and Family Centers



Healthcare in Schools:

During the third quarter of 2023, the White Helmets launched a program to provide health care services in schools. The program includes deploying mobile health teams to 33 schools equipped with first aid and hygiene supplies, along with conducting health examinations for students. Each mobile unit consists of a general practitioner and a nurse. The vehicles are equipped with vital medical resources, including examination tables, portable oxygen, and essential medical supplies.

Healthcare activities in schools include:

- General health awareness training and first aid education for school staff.
- Medical examinations for all students to identify infectious diseases and detect any significant health issues they may face.
- Providing chlorine and fluoride tablets to each school to ensure access to clean water, in addition to first aid kits and hygiene supplies.

This initiative aims to promote a health-conscious culture within the school community. Providing necessary resources and training emphasizes the commitment to creating a safe and healthy learning environment for both students and staff.

A total of 1,270 female students and teachers, as well as 1,254 male students and teachers in 33 schools in the Azmarin and Darkoush districts in the countryside of Idlib, and the Tarhin and Shwiha districts in Aleppo eastern countryside benefited from school clinic services. Respiratory diseases topped the diagnoses, followed by skin diseases and digestive diseases.

Psychosocial Support

In August, the White Helmets added psychosocial support services to the package of health services provided in Women and Family Centers in an effort to reach a community that is psychologically recovering after years of war and oppression, and to live a healthy and sound social life.

These services are provided by psychosocial support workers for children and mothers primarily through sessions that promote early childhood concepts, physical and psychological development areas, as well as parenting skills training for mothers to strengthen relationships between children and their parents and increase opportunities for children to strengthen their ability to orient themselves correctly towards their goals.

A total of 20,822 individuals, including 10,231 women and 10,528 children, benefited from psychological support sessions, including individual and group sessions covering stress management, parenting skills, early childhood, recreational activities, and gender-based violence.



Section Four:

Awareness-Raising Activities

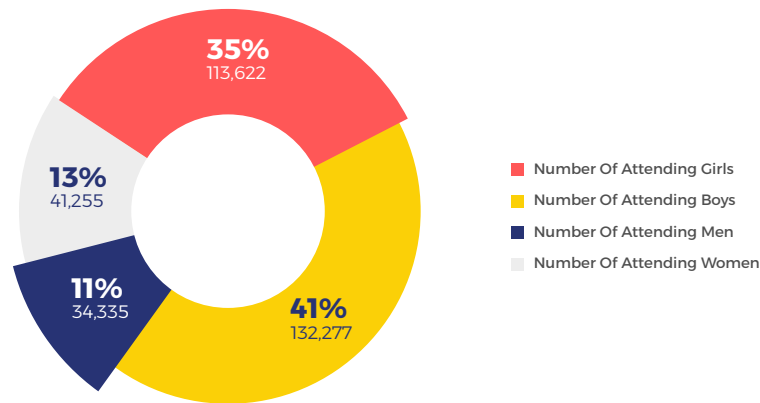
The year 2023 was a distinguished year for the community awareness program as it was diverse and rich in planned topics in addition to emergency topics such as how to behave properly and the safest evacuation methods in the event of earthquakes. The volunteers also launched an initiative to introduce children to voluntary work by visiting White Helmets centers and introducing them to the work of volunteers in the centers.

Specialized White Helmets teams organized 8,827 awareness activities during the year in 515 communities, benefiting 321,489 people, including 41,255 women and 245,899 children.

These awareness-raising activities enhance the role of these centers, leveraging their effective outreach to community members, particularly women and children, to deliver the awareness message in various areas, including health prevention and civil protection, using specialized and regularly updated training toolkits to keep pace with the evolving challenges of the local communities. The activities included awareness sessions, children's activities, and gift distributions. Awareness publications were also distributed, and wall posters were placed in most public buildings, especially in schools and educational institutions.



Figure 13: No. of beneficiaries of awareness-raising activities



These awareness-raising activities were organized in diverse locations to ensure the widest participation of all segments of society. Activities within schools constituted the largest proportion, accounting for 40%, while 19% of the activities were in camps, where the focus was on the priorities of the IDPs. Meanwhile, 17% of these activities were hosted at the Women and Family Centers.

Figure 14: Distribution of awareness-raising activities by location

School	40%	3,543
Camp	19%	1,673
WH Center	17%	1,468
Home	4%	389
Mosque	4%	356
Store	4%	315
Public Building	3%	274
Souk	2%	208
Road	1%	128
Civil Society	1%	50
Field	1%	47
Medical Facility	1%	45

The centers continued to monitor the most important situations on the ground and selected topics based on priorities. Health awareness took the lead, encompassing various activities, including cholera prevention, influenza prevention, and advice for asthma patients. Strategic awareness followed, particularly raising awareness on disaster management, safety measures during earthquakes, and search and rescue procedures, especially evacuation after an earthquake. Awareness sessions also covered safety measures during earthquakes, dealing with fires, and educating about the early warning service for the danger of air raids.



Section Five: Mine Action

Non-technical Survey Operations

Non-technical survey operations contribute to the protection of civilians by identifying areas contaminated with unexploded ordnance. Non-technical survey teams work to identify the locations of ordnance in contaminated areas and inform final disposal teams of their locations, who carry out the final disposal and secure these locations.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) survey teams conducted 1,450 non-technical survey operations, confirming the presence of 531 areas contaminated with unexploded ordnance. These areas included 72% within agricultural lands, in addition to urban areas (public squares and residential buildings, riverbanks, and roads, and a factory). This proactive identification and mapping of contaminated areas protects civilians and guides UXO removal efforts.



In cooperation with the Manahil Project, the White Helmets carried out a visual survey of 29 schools in different areas in northwestern Syria in order to verify that these schools were free of unexploded ordnance.

A successful internal survey and inspection was conducted for all targeted schools, including a full inspection of the school perimeter, and no unexploded ordnance was found during the visual inspection, allowing these schools to be used to receive students during the current school year.

The project will contribute to making the educational environment safer and more suitable to ensure the continued operation of these schools and the safety of all students and educational staff. It will also alleviate the concerns of parents and teachers.

UXO Removal:

Based on non-technical survey operations and civilian reports, final disposal ordnance teams carried out 1,078 disposal operations of unexploded ordnance in 207 villages in northwest Syria, during which they safely and successfully disposed of 1,082 unexploded ordnances. This count also included 325 submunitions (cluster bombs), 171 rockets, 206 projectiles, 181 grenades, 140 mortar rounds, and 48 fuses.

Figure 15: Breakdown of the unexploded ordnance removed by type

Sub-munition	30%	325
projectiles	19%	206
Grenades	17%	181
Rockets	16%	171
Mortar rounds	13%	140
Fuses	4%	48

Breakdown of UXO Removal by Location

The removal of unexploded ordnance included 760 operations in agricultural lands, 121 operations in houses, 59 operations in mountains, 27 operations on roads, 22 operations in meadows, 14 operations in educational facilities, 9 operations in factories, and 9 operations on riverbanks. The efforts of survey and removal teams contributed to enabling hundreds of farmers to safely return to their lands and resume their agricultural activities.



Awareness Raising

Awareness-raising teams on the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance carried out 4,491 awareness-raising activities to educate the community about the dangers of remnants of war and unexploded ordnance. These sessions, which focused on school students, aim to reduce the number of victims by teaching participants the appropriate procedures for dealing with unexploded ordnance, and providing them with the knowledge they need for the standard procedures for dealing with explosive remnants of war (ERW) to reduce casualties and to be able to report the presence of unexploded ordnance to the UXO teams.

These awareness activities benefited 94,630 people, including 89,196 children. The sessions targeted children due to the significant risks to their lives when playing near or approaching unexploded ordnance. The sessions were conducted in schools, including mobile schools within camps, totaling 2,915 sessions.

Figure 16: No. of the beneficiaries of the awareness activities led by the UXO teams

Boys	52%	49,193
Girls	42%	40,003
Women	4%	3,390
Men	2%	2,044

Success Story: Ahmed

Our friend Ahmed is the hero of a new story about protecting civilians from the danger of unexploded ordnance (UXO). During an awareness session at school, Ahmed learned the golden rule: "Don't approach, don't touch, report to the White Helmets."

While helping his father irrigate their land on the outskirts of Taftnaz in the Idlib countryside, Ahmed saw something strange. He did not approach it, but instead, he ran immediately to his father and asked his brothers not to approach it either. They together reported it to the White Helmets Center that immediately dispatched a team to examine the object, which turned out to be a cluster bomb. The UXO team destroyed it, sparing civilians from its danger. Ahmed's father was proud of his son's behavior and the lessons he learned from the White Helmets team's awareness session.

The volunteer Abdul Karim Al-Khattabi, who participated in the response, said: "What Ahmed did was a heroic act that spared himself and his family a disaster that could have happened due to the explosion of the cluster bomb. It motivates us to intensify awareness sessions."



Section Six: Training Activities

The White Helmets empowered the volunteers and introduced them to the latest academic and practical methods, and raised the level of their response through the local expertise and competencies available within the volunteer staff, in addition to calling on external expertise when necessary.



The White Helmets organized 26 internal training activities in which the organization's volunteers participated according to their specialization. The trainings covered many topics according to the needs assessment and priorities in northwest Syria, the most prominent of which included international humanitarian law, security and safety, firefighting and water rescue, search and rescue, risk management, first aid, cholera prevention, and unexploded ordnance survey and removal.

Qualified White Helmets trainers continued to provide training courses within specialized training centers, educational and health institutions, civil society organizations, supporting teams, the local community, NGOs and INGOs, including Ihsan, Watan, Sard, Mazaya, Takaful Al-Sham, Ishraqat Amal, Basmat Janaodyat, People in Need, Global Communities, and Welthungerhilfe (WHH).. The White Helmets organized training activities in which 2,671 male trainees and 298 female trainees participated. The training covered many topics according to the needs assessment and priorities in northwest Syria, the most prominent of which are strengthening community participation, security and safety, first aid, cholera prevention, and unexploded ordnance survey and removal.



Section Seven:

Activities of the Legal Department

During 2023, the White Helmets organization, through the legal department, conducted training for volunteers on international humanitarian law and laws related to civil defense work, with emphasis on the importance of providing all humanitarian services to all people in need, regardless of color, race, or belief. The volunteers were also trained on traffic law. The legal department also organized contracts and MOUs between the White Helmets organization and other entities and organizations, and represented the the White Helmets organization in attending lawsuits in the courts.

In another context, the legal department continued to provide legal advice to administrative offices and directorates on the impact of correct work practices, and to coordinate legal work in the directorates according to a unified legal policy and procedures. The legal department also continued to follow up on legal cases, receive complaints and objections, and process them in accordance with the approved complaints protocol.







Section Eight:

The Hero Fund

The Hero Fund is one of the leading solidarity initiatives that aims to care for the families of the White Helmets martyrs who sacrificed themselves to serve the local community and save lives. The fund also oversees the treatment of wounded and sick volunteers in Syria and in Turkish hospitals until they are cured, and then rehabilitates them so that they are able to work again according to the type of injury, which ensures a decent life for the volunteers and their families.

During 2023, the fund provided monthly support to 308 families of White Helmets martyrs. The financial support includes securing a decent living for the martyr's family, in addition to providing the requirements for completing school and university education for their children so that they can live a better future.

The fund followed up the treatment of 292 volunteers, with various injuries and illnesses that included heart diseases, bone surgeries and cancer. The fund also oversaw the treatment of the injured, including four patients with complete paralysis. Moreover, the fund followed up on the maintenance of prosthetics for 11 volunteers. It is worth noting that several injured volunteers return to work in the White Helmets centers according to their physical abilities after recovery. Their return to work is a sustainable psychological support for them and proves to them and to the community their continued ability to work and give. The fund also adopts some volunteers permanently if they are unable to work again.





Section Nine: Sentry Service



The White Helmets continued to provide the Sentry Service which is an early warning service, launched in August 2016 that was developed in partnership with Hala Systems, a technology company that specializes in providing solutions to save lives in conflict zones.

Sentry sends warnings related to the activity of aircraft in Syria before raids occur, with the aim of warning civilians and reducing the number of victims of aerial bombardment.

The service receives aircraft movement observations from reliable civilian observatories and analyzes them to predict the places that may be targeted and calculate the estimated time of flight arrival to them, then publishes warnings through the currently active channels as soon as possible.

Over 2023, Sentry made significant progress in its mission to protect civilians in Syria. Sentry issued thousands of warnings to civilians, helping to evacuate hundreds of people to safety before airstrikes occurred. In total, Sentry conducted 21,292 observations and was able to successfully issue 50,426 warnings through its Visual Warning System (VWS) and other connected devices. As part of its mission to protect civilians before airstrikes, Sentry organized 745 awareness-raising campaigns benefiting 7,564 individuals, including 7,292 females.

Medical and educational facilities, as well as protection and civil defense centers, are among the facilities that benefit from Sentry's warning system. These facilities are critical in providing essential services to civilians, and the warning system helps to ensure that they can continue operating even during times of conflict. Sentry has installed its warning system, called Visual Warning System (VWS) at 490 facilities across northwest of Syria, including medical and educational facilities, protection and civil defense centers, and other locations. The VWS helps to alert people at these facilities when there is a risk of aerial bombardment, enabling them to take necessary precautions to stay safe. In addition to installing the VWS, Sentry has also conducted outreach efforts to inform people about the warning system and how to stay safe during an aerial bombardment.

The Sentry team has been consistently conducting maintenance and troubleshooting operations on the alarm devices at all facilities to ensure that they are in good working condition and ready to serve their purpose. These operations have included checking for low-performing devices due to electrical or internet issues and replacing broken devices. In total, there have been 752 maintenance and troubleshooting operations and 130 device replacements. These efforts have helped to maintain the readiness and reliability of the warning system, which is essential for protecting the people who rely on these facilities for essential services.

In addition to using the Internet to deliver warnings, the Sentry team has also been working with Hala to prepare radio broadcasting devices in 2024 as a way to reach people who do not have access to the internet, including ambulance drivers and civilians. These devices can be used to broadcast warning messages to people in the affected area, helping them to stay safe during times of conflict. The Sentry team has conducted 13 field follow-up operations to prepare this radio broadcasting devices, including installing the devices and reporting on their coverage quality. These efforts will ensure that people who may not have access to the internet can still receive important warning messages and take necessary precautions to stay safe.

Success Story:

The White Helmets received a thank-you message from the Buhoury Clinic praising the timely warnings from the Sentry System. The clinic management successfully implemented security and safety measures, reducing patient and visitor movement to the clinic and minimizing the presence of vehicles outside the clinic on August 20, 2023. This occurred moments before a warplane targeted a location near the clinic.

Section Ten: Communications, Advocacy and Media

External Communications

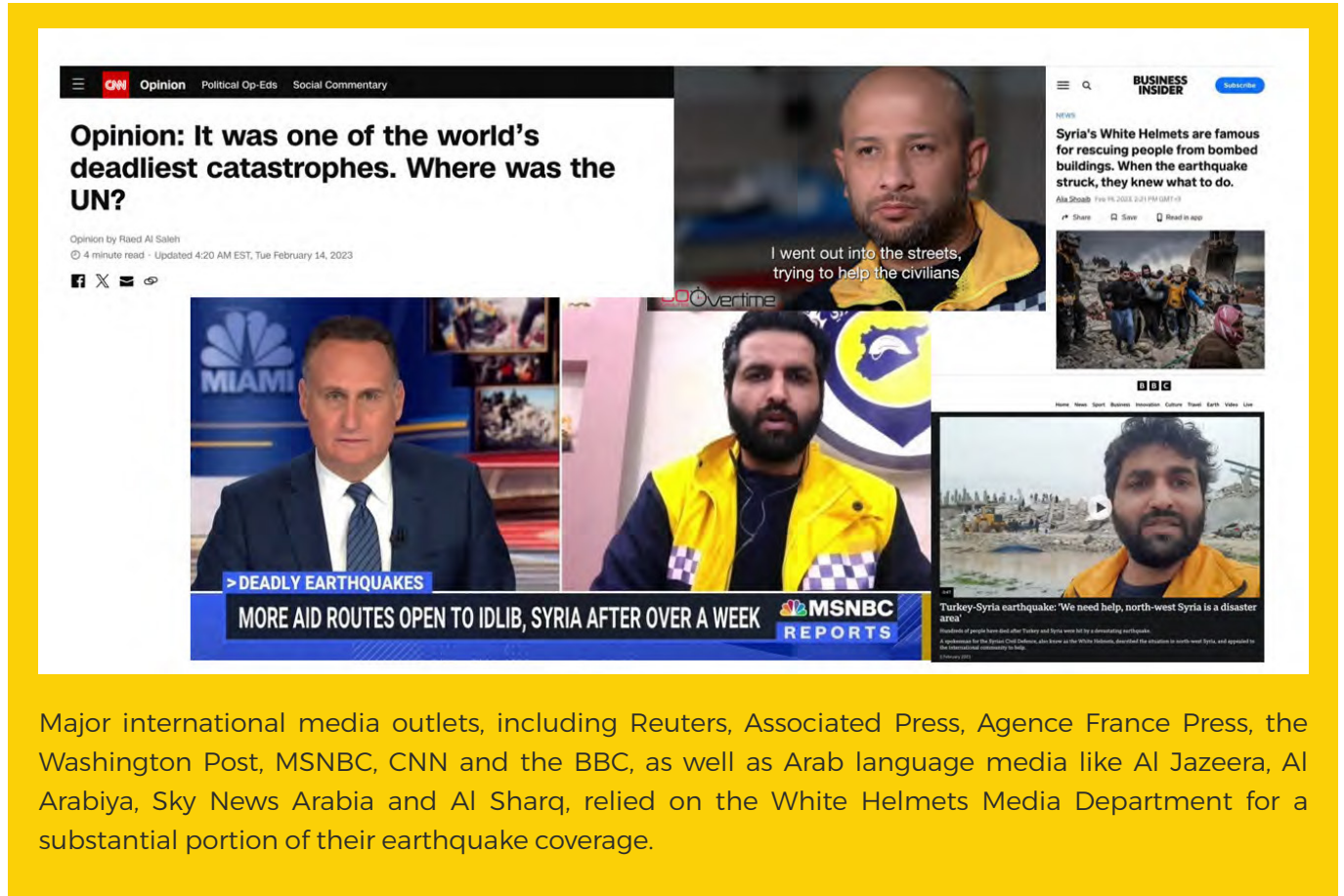
External relations are an extension of the White Helmets' life-saving work. Our teams in the media, advocacy and communications departments elevate the work of the volunteers and advocate for civilian protection in the corridors of power.



Amplifying our teams' earthquake response on the international stage

The devastating earthquakes on February 6, 2023, caused a surge in international attention to The White Helmets and the situation in northwest Syria.

We responded to journalistic inquiries related to the earthquake from approximately 800 reporters within the initial ten days of the response, spanning Arabic, English, and a plethora of other languages.



Major international media outlets, including Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France Press, the Washington Post, MSNBC, CNN and the BBC, as well as Arab language media like Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Sky News Arabia and Al Sharq, relied on the White Helmets Media Department for a substantial portion of their earthquake coverage.

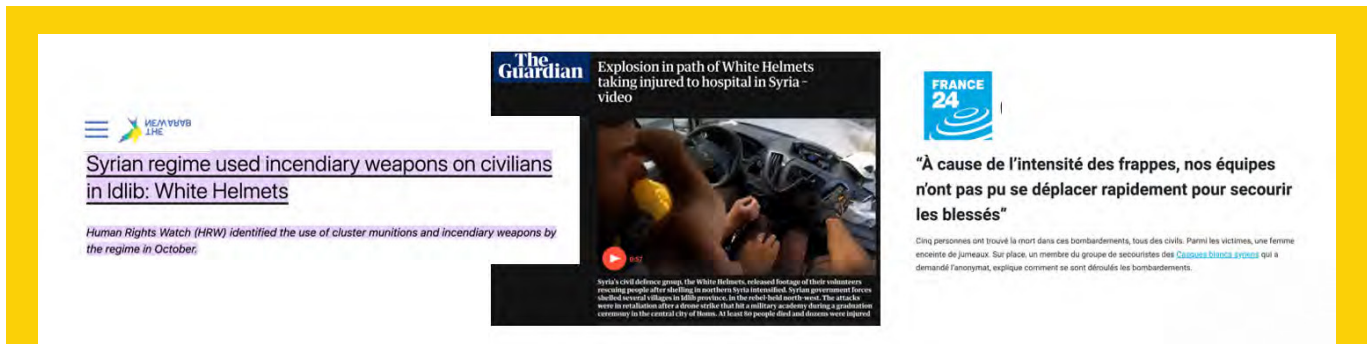


Our situation reports, advocacy meetings and participation in events ensured that much needed information about daily updates and needs onto the desks of decision-makers. Significant fundraising drives, including with our partner, the Syria Campaign, were supported by hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens from 194 countries.

We worked with internationally renowned figures like Angelina Jolie to raise awareness about the impact of the earthquake and to support the White Helmets' response.

A credible and influential source of information

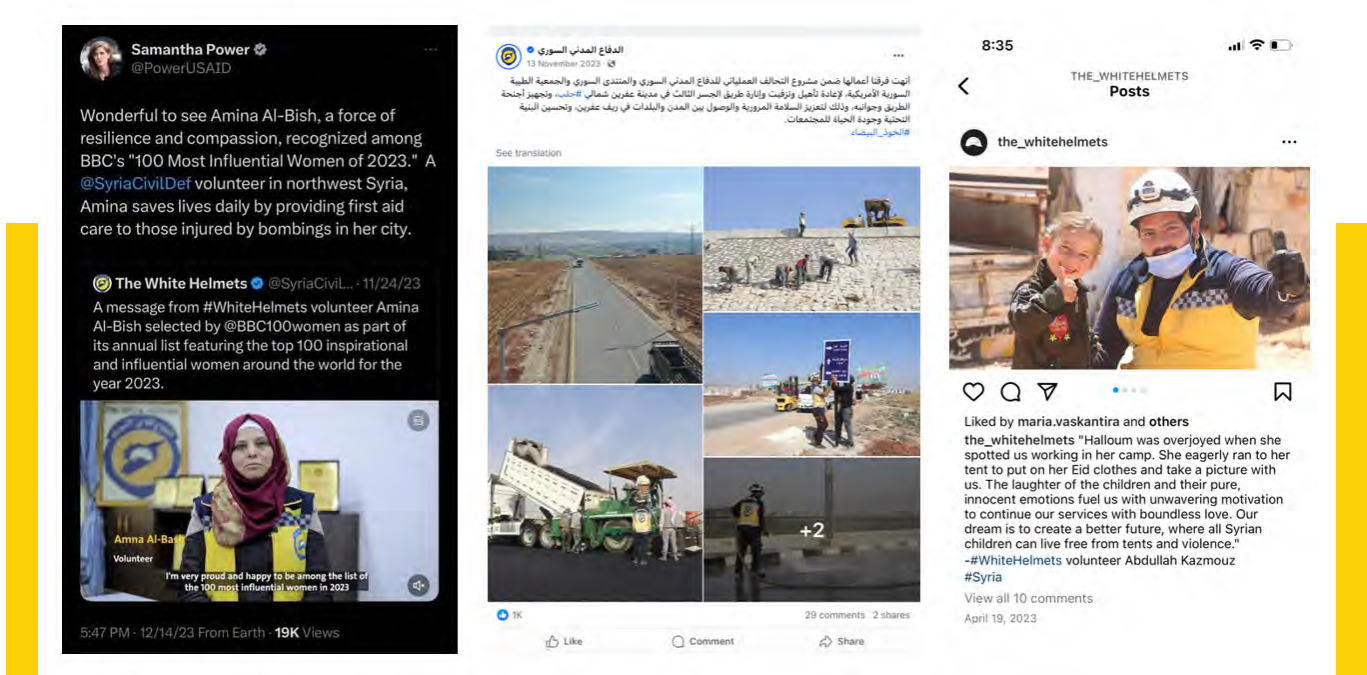
Beyond the immediate coverage of the earthquake response, the White Helmets Media Department is a vital source of information about the situation in Syria – from military attacks, to fires, to flooding.



Our data on attacks and civilian casualties during the October escalation were used 36 times by 22 news agencies in the last quarter of 2023, including the Guardian, France24, the BBC and Al Jazeera, as well as investigations by organisations like Human Rights Watch and Bellingcat.

Our influence in 2023 reached beyond Arabic- and English-speaking media increased in 2023, in part because of the efforts on the earthquake response, including in media outlets requesting and publishing our information in French, Portuguese, Spanish, Greek, Turkish, Kurdish, Malay, German, Norwegian, Thai, Japanese, Korean, and other languages globally.

Our credibility is not only recognised by international audiences. A recent survey by the Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network found that the White Helmets is almost unanimously named by local communities as a trusted source of information during emergencies.



Our social media accounts provide key updates on operations and share stories from our volunteers.

The White Helmets manages 20 social media accounts in Arabic, English and Turkish. Our combined Twitter accounts in all three languages clocked 40 million impressions in 2023, while our Arabic Facebook posts saw almost 2.5 million engagements. After starting a new Arabic account at the beginning of 2023, we received 4.2 million impressions on Instagram.

Building relationships with decision-makers

According to our partners, hearing directly from the White Helmets in meetings and events gives “not just the facts, but also the colour, the emotions, the feelings, on the ground.” In 2023 we have sought to increase our outreach with a diverse variety of governments and partner with over twenty Syrian and international civil society organisations.

135
Advocacy meetings
with over 160 people



Built relationships with
27
governments

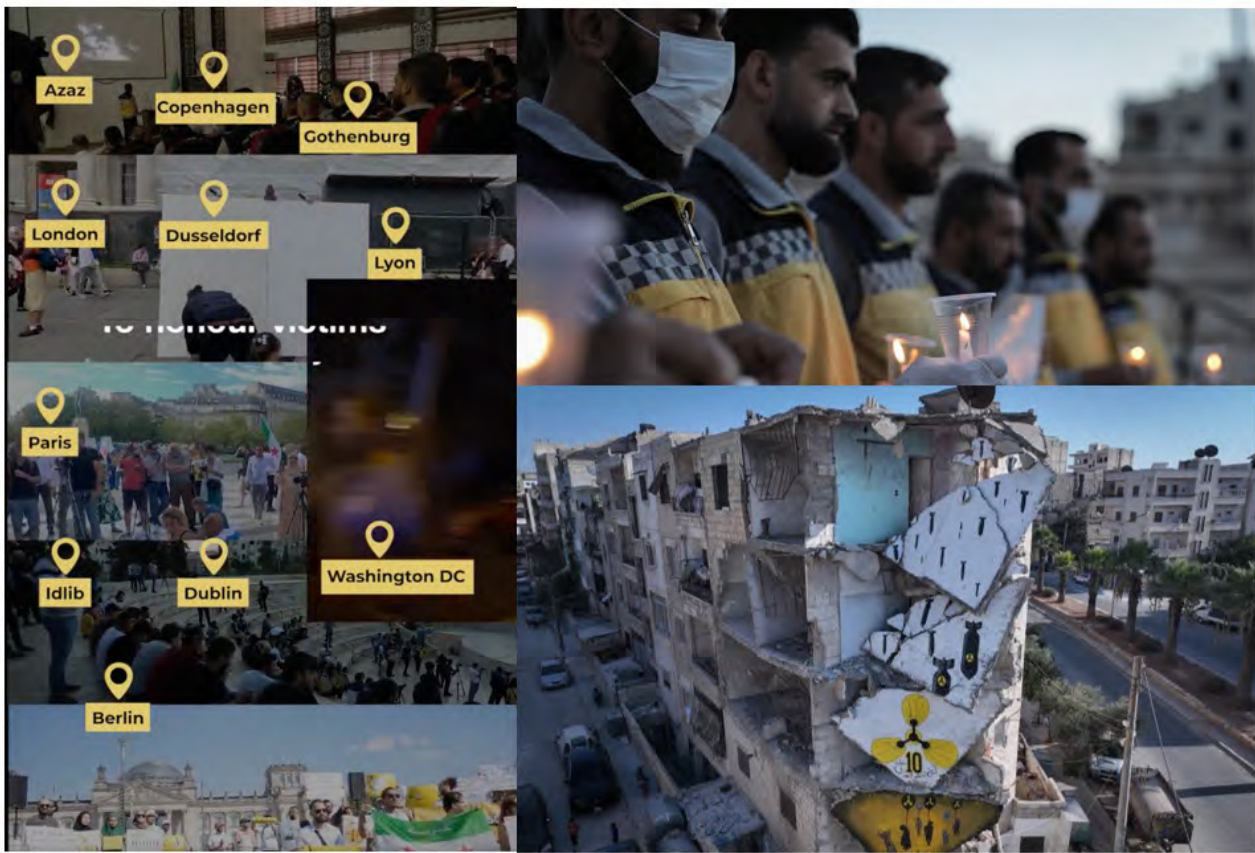


We spoke at 30 events globally, including coordinating events at the sidelines of major international convenings like the Syria Brussels’ conference and the United Nations General Assembly.

The Advocacy Department also devoted significant time to campaign for sustainable humanitarian access to northwest Syria. We briefed elected members of the Council in the lead up to the July vote on the renewal of the UN cross border resolution and sent out a briefing to all members of the General Assembly to encourage their participation at the subsequent debate on the use of the UNSC veto on the issue. After the failure of the UN vote and the beginning of a new phase of cross-border access based on consent, we drafted a joint statement that was endorsed by more than 80 Syrian CSOs, demonstrating an “impressive unity of purpose”, as described by an international partner.

Campaigning for justice for victims of chemical attacks

Our major campaign of 2023 beat the drum on the need for accountability for the use of chemical weapons. As first responders, we have responded to more than 50 chemical attacks.



In August, we joined Syrians across the globe to remember the victims of the Ghouta chemical attack ten years on and call for justice. We organised vigils, events and commissioned murals in Idlib and Afrin, and supported activities coordinated by Don't Suffocate the Truth in Paris, London and beyond.



To end the year, we saw a culmination of many months of effort behind the scenes to advance a proposal for the establishment of a new international tribunal for chemical attacks. The proposal was launched in partnership with 16 Syrian CSOs, with a new online hub at www.cwtribunal.org and was covered in Reuters, the BBC and the Washington Post.

In November, we convened the first Syrian civil society conference on chemical weapons in the Hague, which brought together more than 10 Syrian civil society organisations and victims and family groups and 27 States Parties to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We brought together an exhibition of Syrian artwork on the use of chemical weapons to provide a space for reflection and memorialisation during the discussions. This Syrian-owned Conference aimed to bring Syrian voices to the OPCW, who have consistently been denied permission to participate in the Conference of State Parties.







Syria Civil Defense
The White Helmets

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