

Activity Report

The White Helmets Work Report

October 2024



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Executive summary:

The White Helmets volunteers continued their humanitarian operations and responses to save lives in northwest Syria during October. They provided diverse services in the areas of search and rescue, ambulance services, healthcare, and awareness-raising within 506 communities and 637 camps.

The volunteers carried out 142 search and rescue operations in response to military attacks, during which they recovered 14 dead bodies, including a woman and a child, and rescued 90 injured individuals, including 11 women and 26 children.

Firefighting teams successfully controlled 288 fires, rescuing four injured men. Additionally, the volunteers responded to 171 traffic accidents, providing assistance to 169 injured individuals, including 22 women and 32 children. While a man and a woman passed away due to traffic accidents.

In the health sector women and family healthcare centers provided 11,365 health services. The beneficiaries included %60 women, %18 boys, and %14 girls. Community health teams organized 6,152 health awareness sessions and home visits, benefiting 11,018 individuals, including 6,733 women, 1,429 boys, and 2,148 girls. White Helmets paramedics transported 21,612 patients, among them 9,512 women and 3,417 children.

On the other hand, the White Helmets volunteers conducted 1,370 community resilience activities. Ensuring the delivery of these humanitarian responses to all segments of society, especially vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities, was a priority.

The Protection Program conducted 162 awareness sessions attended by 4,560 individuals, including 1,277 women, 1,520 boys, and 1,481 girls.





Section One:
Search and
Rescue Program



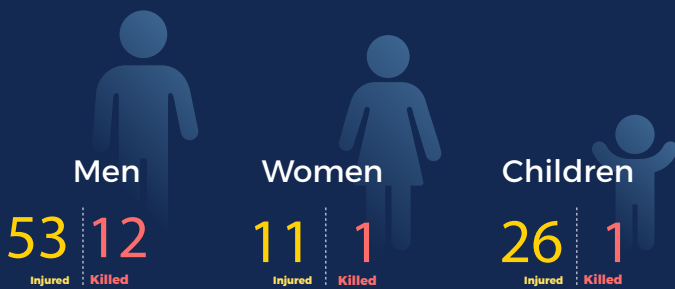
Emergency Response to Military Attacks

The search and rescue teams persisted in delivering quality responses to military attacks targeting northwest Syria during October. The response included life-saving first aid for the wounded at the site of injury and retrieving the deceased. Moreover, our firefighters extinguished fires caused by bombardments or explosions, ensuring the safety of the sites.

The White Helmets teams conduct their life-saving operations with strict compliance with the International Humanitarian Law, and full respect for neutrality as a core value, ensuring that all victims receive assistance based only on their humanitarian needs, without any discrimination.

The White Helmets volunteers conducted 142 search and rescue operations in October, the highest number in 2024, bringing the total for the year to 840 operations. During these operations, they recovered the bodies of 14 people, including one woman and one child, and rescued 90 injured individuals, including 11 women and 26 children. This represents the highest number of fatalities and injuries recorded in a single month this year.

Figure 1: Civilian casualties during responses to military attacks



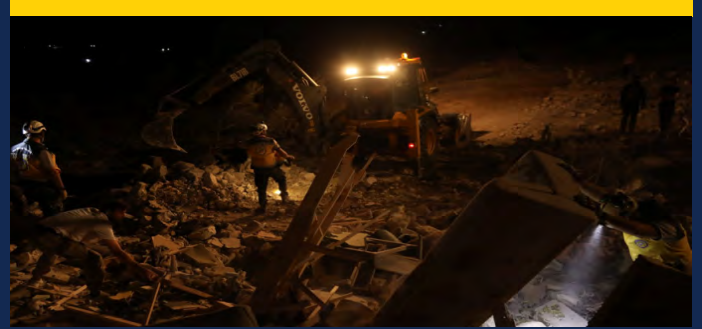
Syrian regime forces were responsible for most of the attacks, 104 attacks and Russian forces carried out 19 attacks. Additionally, 18 attacks originated from areas controlled by the Syrian regime and SDF, along with one anonymous attack.

The largest number of attacks were carried out using artillery shells (74 attacks), followed by 35 attacks with suicide drones. Warplanes conducted 19 attacks, there were ten attacks using rocket launchers, three attacks with guided missiles, and one attack with light weapons.

Noteworthy Operations

Syrian regime forces targeted with artillery shells civilian homes in Al-Qasr village in Aleppo western countryside on October 3, killing an old man.

Russian warplanes targeted a furniture workshop and an olive press on the outskirts of Idlib city, killing 10 civilians and wounding 32 others.



Our teams continued search and rescue operations for several hours, combing through the rubble for missing individuals. In a moment of hope amid the devastation, our volunteers rescued a child, Khaled Balsha, alive after more than three hours of relentless effort under the debris of the workshop.

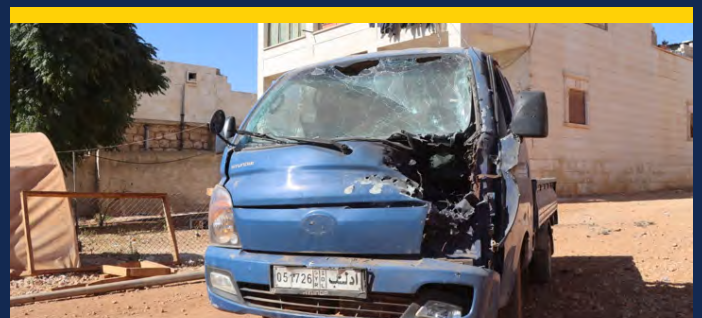


Syrian regime forces targeted with artillery shells a home between the villages of Maarbalit and Maarzaf in Idlib southern countryside on October 16, killing a five-year-old girl.

Rocket launchers originating from areas jointly controlled by Syrian regime forces and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) targeted civilian neighborhoods in the city of Al-Bab, in Aleppo eastern countryside on the 24th of October injuring seven civilians, including four women and an infant.

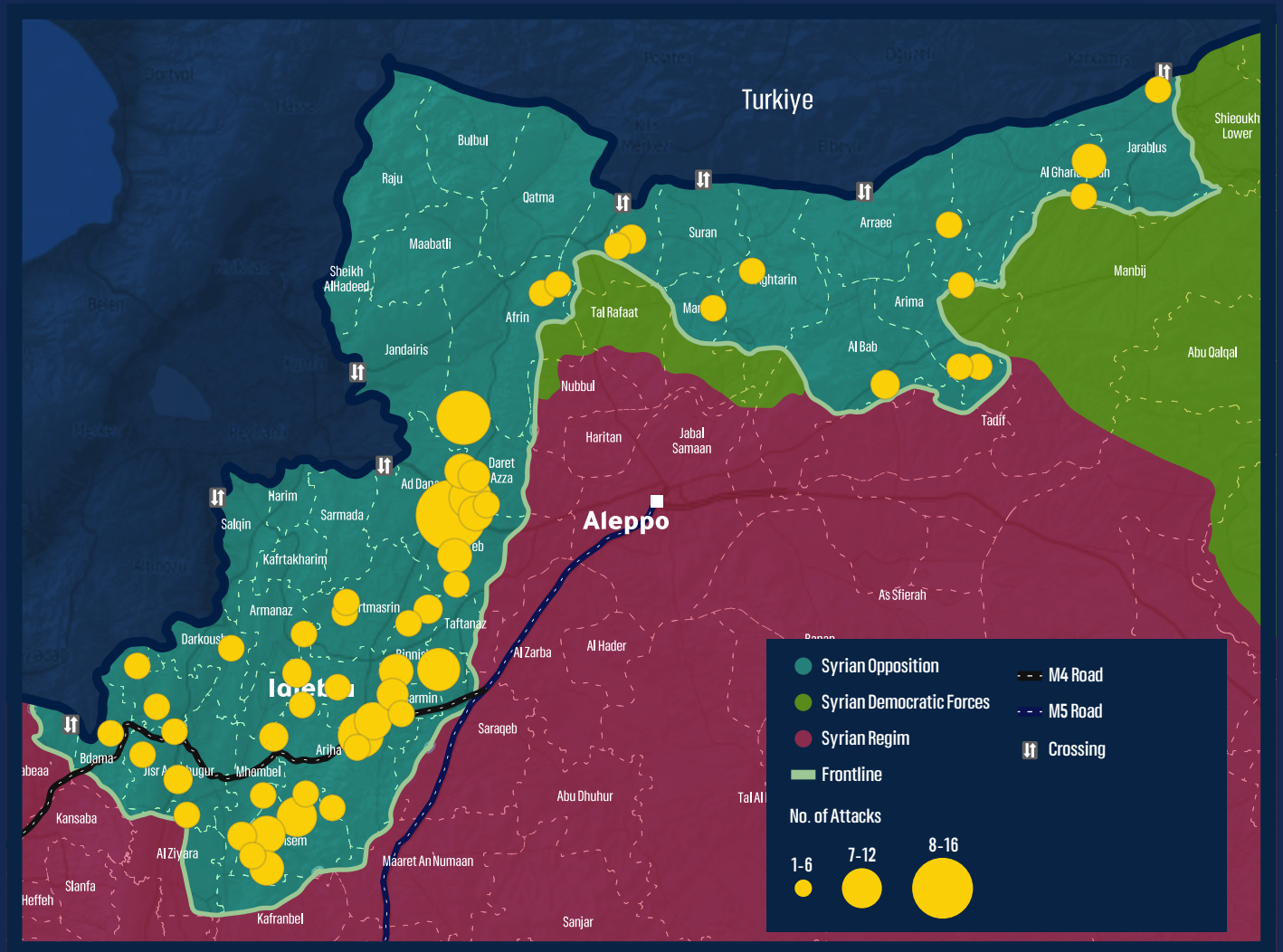


Syrian regime forces targeted with several suicide drones the city of Al-Atareb in Aleppo western countryside on the 25th of October, injuring three civilians, including woman and a child.



Search and rescue operations in response to the military attacks covered 55 communities spanning cities, towns and villages. Notably, Al-Atareb experienced the highest number of attacks (17), followed by Daret Izza (11) and Maarbalit (eight) attacks.

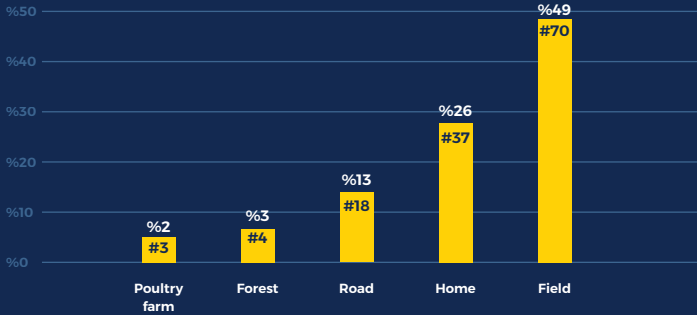
Map: Military attacks during October



The vast majority of the targets were agricultural lands and fields, with 70 attacks, followed by civilian homes with 37 attacks, and 18 attacks on roads. The targets also included several vital and economic facilities, such as Al-Muhsinli School, Al-Kilani Power Station, Al-Zubair Mosque, and Azaz National Hospital.

All necessary measures have been taken to respond to the different attacks in these various places by adhering to the established standard work procedures that ensure the provision of timely and professional life-saving responses, taking into account the unique challenges and logistical considerations imposed by different environments.

Figure 2: Search and rescue locations



The White Helmets mourned the volunteer Omar Shamma, who passed away on October the 10th after illness, bringing the total number of martyrs and deceased White Helmets volunteers to 312.

Firefighting operations:

WH volunteers extinguished 288 fires in 124 communities and 24 camps. Of these, Idlib city experienced the highest number of fires (26), followed by Tarhin (19 fires) the city of Al-Bab (11 fires). The volunteers extinguished 72 fires in civilian homes, 50 fires in fields, 31 fires on roads, 29 fires in shops, 24 fires in camps, 22 fires in forests and 18 fires in makeshift refineries.

Figure 3: Firefighting operations by location of the fire

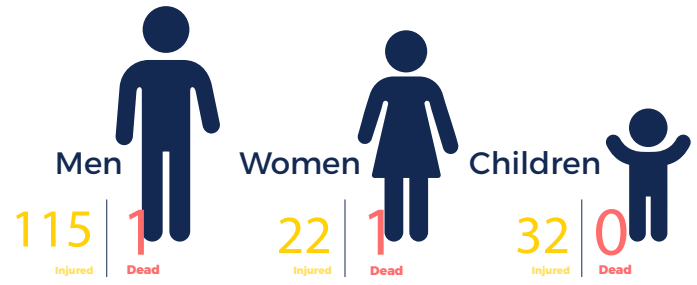


During these operations, four injured men were rescued. The majority of the fires, 75 % were due to unidentified causes, while %14 were caused by electrical short circuits, %8 were caused by fuel leaks, and %3 were caused by gas leaks.

Response to traffic accidents

The White Helmets teams responded to 171 traffic accidents in 99 communities, during which they aided 169 civilians, including 22 women and 32 children. While a man and a woman passed away due to traffic accidents. Notably, the highest number of traffic accidents was recorded in Idlib city (nine), and Azaz city (six).

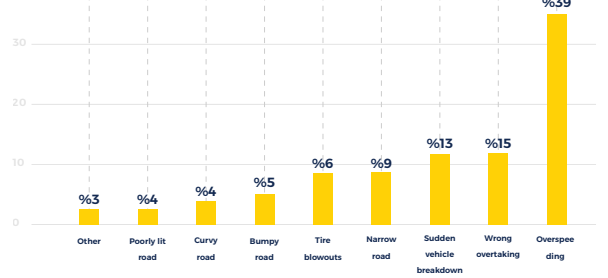
Figure 4: No. of people rescued during traffic accident response operations



Car accidents accounted for the highest percentage of accidents at %52, followed by motorcycle accidents at %37, while truck and heavy machinery accidents accounted for %9.

The causes of traffic accidents varied. The most common cause was speeding, at %39, followed by wrong overtaking at %15, sudden vehicle breakdowns at %13, and narrow roads at %9.

Figure 5: Causes of traffic accidents



Response to Drowning Incidents:

The White Helmets water rescue teams retrieved the bodies of a drowned man and a drowned child.





Section Two:
Health Program



Health Services Provided by Women and Family Healthcare Centers

The female staff at the women and family healthcare centers continued providing healthcare services to beneficiaries both inside and outside the centers as described below:

Primary Healthcare Services:

The medical services provided in the women and family healthcare centers are not limited to providing health services inside centers, but home visits are carried out to provide needed services, mainly nursing and bandage services, to those who are unable to come to the centers due to disability or lack of transportation.

The centers conducted 11,365 medical services, including reproductive health and nursing and bandage services; dressing and follow-up treatment represented %34, the nursing services represented %26, while reproductive health services provided by skilled midwives made up %40 of the total services.

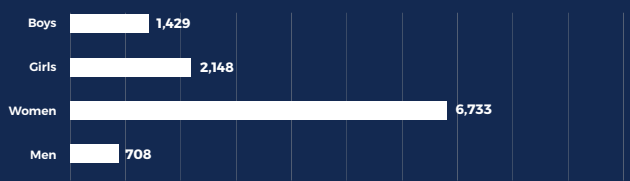


Beneficiaries included %60 women, %18 boys and %14 girls. IDPs constituted %63 of the beneficiaries, whereas %37% were from host communities, and %3 of the beneficiaries were people with disabilities (PWDs), which confirms the achievement of the desired goal of our services in NWS by enhancing access for the most vulnerable groups in society.

Health Awareness Sessions:

The community health workers at the women and family healthcare centers continued their health outreach activities to serve IDPs and host communities. 6,152 health awareness sessions and household visits were conducted, benefiting 11,018 individuals in 90 communities, including 6,733 women, 1,429 boys, and 2,148 girls.

Figure 6: No. of beneficiaries of health awareness sessions by age group.



Those awareness sessions mainly focused on precautionary measures regarding communicable (CD) and non-communicable (NCD) diseases, family health, and healthy lifestyles, in addition to nutrition, including screening malnutrition among children under 5 years of age and pregnant and lactating women.

Psychosocial Support Services:

The psychosocial support workers at the women and family healthcare centers continued in providing PSS services to beneficiaries in the targeted communities. During the reporting period, 1,324 PSS sessions were conducted, benefiting 3,268 individuals, including 1,722 women, 557 boys and 961 girls. These sessions included 265 group sessions and a parenting skills program, in addition to 1,059 individual sessions delivering psychological first aid.

The women and family healthcare centers surveyed their beneficiaries to measure satisfaction with the health services provided, aiming to continually improve their service delivery mechanisms.

The findings revealed that the main factor influencing the choice of these centers was the high standard of services offered at a rate of %49, followed by the positive interactions experienced by beneficiaries with the female staff at these facilities at %26. Other factors included the availability of free services and the fact that the center serves as the sole medical facility in the area.

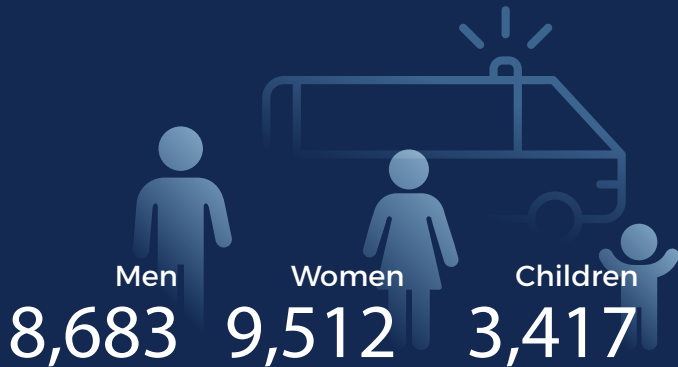
Figure 7: Survey results illustrating the reasons for beneficiaries choosing women and family healthcare centers



The WH emergency and non-emergency medical service operations

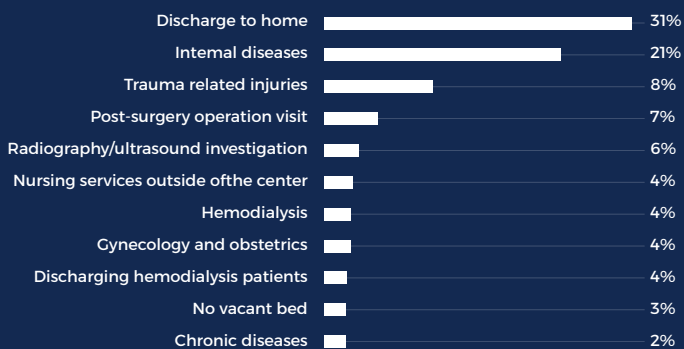
The White Helmets paramedics reached 21,612 patients, including 9,512 women and 3,417 children in 412 communities.

Figure 8: No. of ambulance service beneficiaries



Seventy-seven percent of responses were for IDPs and 23 % for members of the host communities. Among the EMS services provided, the highest percentage, %31, was attributed to discharge cases, while internal medical emergency cases constituted %21 of the cases, and trauma-related injuries accounted for %8 of the total cases addressed by the WH team.

Figure 9: Beneficiaries by type of service provided:



Safe Emergency Transportation Service for Newborns:

The WH initiated this service at the end of December 2023 to cater to the unique needs of newborns and mitigate issues arising during childbirth by adding six advanced ambulances with incubators to the WH ambulance fleet. During the reporting period, there were 161 operations benefiting 163 newborns in 21 communities.

Hemodialysis Patients Transport Service:

The WH dedicates 34 vehicles to transport cold cases, including mainly hemodialysis patients. During the reporting period, the WH team delivered 9,239 transportation services through 2,693 operations. The beneficiaries included %49 women, and %4 children. Also, %56 were IDPs, and %44 were from the local communities.

School Health Activity

505 female students and teachers and 571 male students and teachers within 32 schools benefited from the health services. Respiratory diseases were the most common diagnoses, followed by skin diseases and digestive diseases.





Section Three:

Community Resilience Program

This section includes the White Helmets' operations executed as part of the humanitarian response projects in the WASH sector and early recovery, aimed at bolstering local community resilience. It also covers other logistical activities supporting public facilities. In this context, the volunteers conducted 1,370 community resilience activity across 266 communities and 177 camps in northwest Syria.



The White Helmets volunteers conducted

ground leveling and graveling operations across 121 communities and 70 camps.



300

digging sewage networks operations in 57 communities and 25 camps.



109

various digging operations, including digging (technical holes, foundations, and electrical maintenance) in 94 communities and 54 camps.



213

internal and external cleaning operations were conducted, covering streets, squares, and mosques in 53 villages.



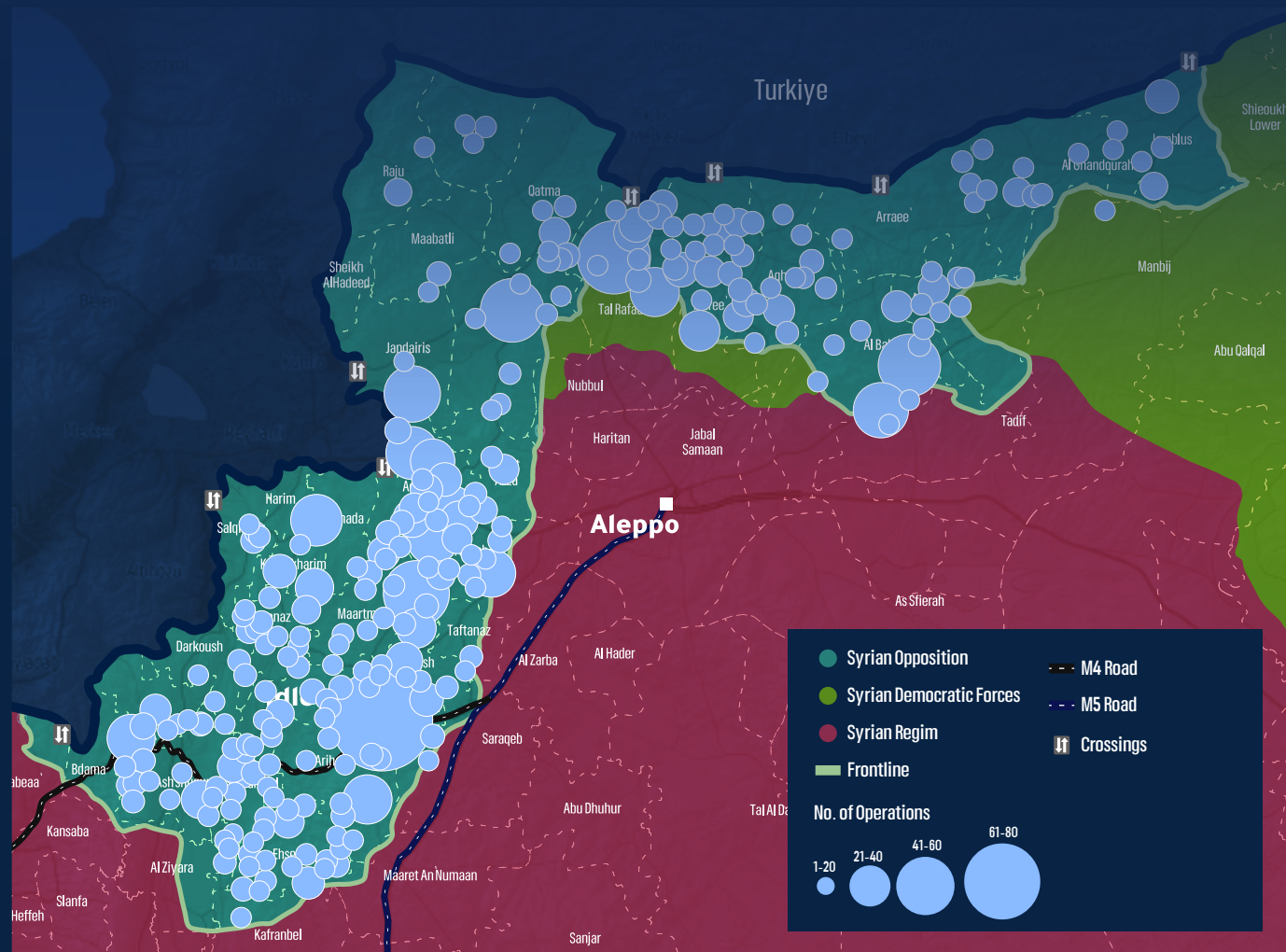
95

road opening operations in 55 communities and 12 camps.



115

Map 2: Community resilience activities in October



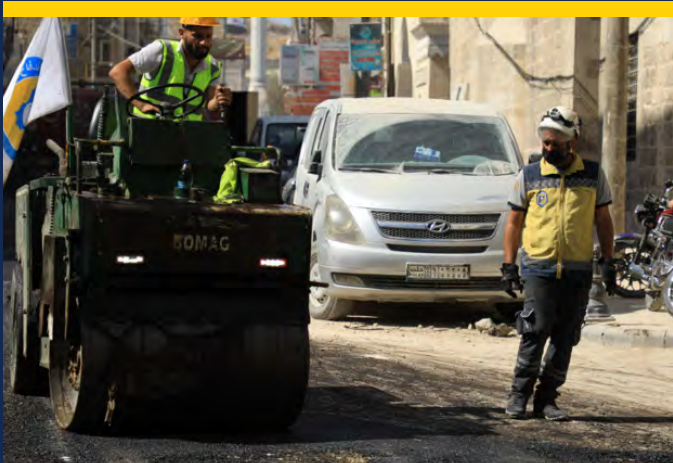
White Helmets volunteers have completed the following infrastructure projects:



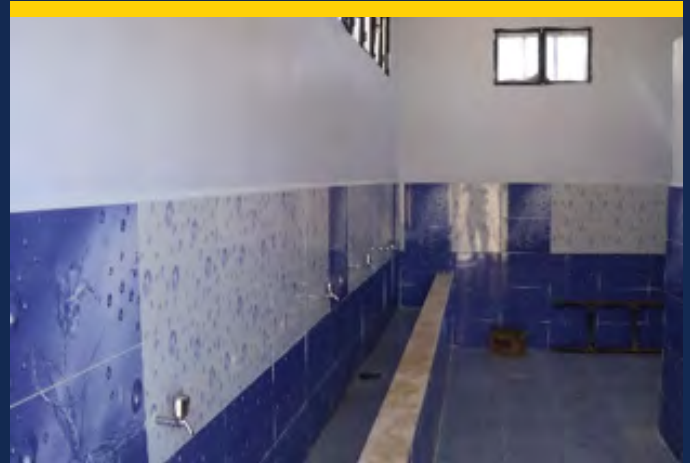
Rehabilitation of 22 earthquake-damaged schools.



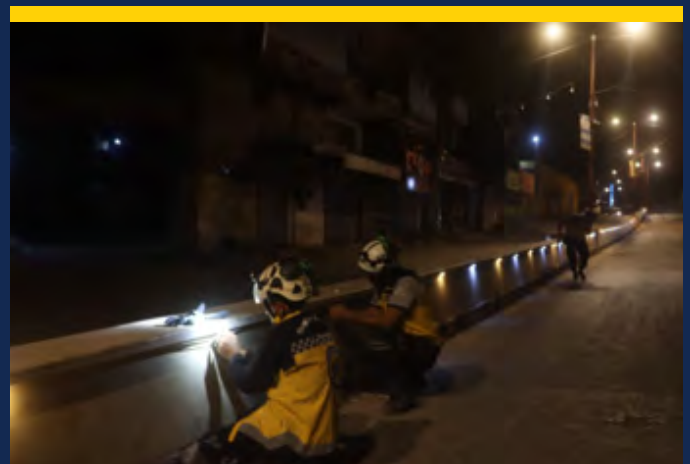
Construction of the Khalid bin Al-Walid School in Jandairis.



Rehabilitation of sewage networks over a length of 5,077 meters in the city of Al-Bab.



WASH activities in 33 schools.



Installation of street lighting along a 600-meter stretch in the center of the main road in Ariha in Idlib southern countryside.

White Helmets volunteers also continue working on the following projects:



Rehabilitation of the 8.5-kilometer-long Ain al-Beida-Qandaria road.



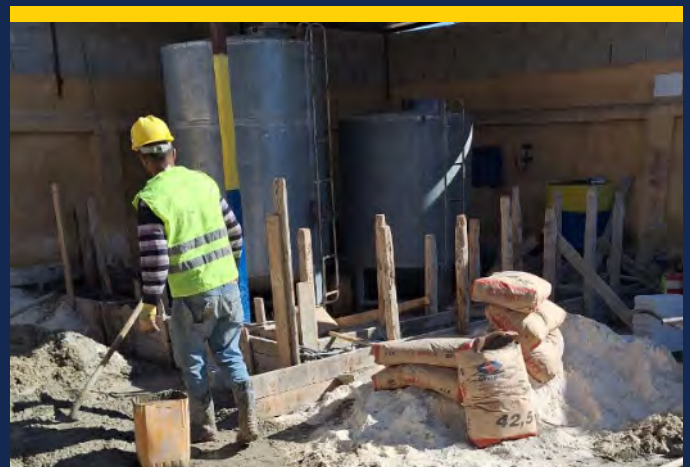
Construction of the Cancer Treatment Center in Afrin City.



Rehabilitation of 3,000 meters of sewage networks in Abu Talha Community.



Roads rehabilitation inside camps through graveling and leveling within 25 camps



Rehabilitation works within several WH Centers and WH women and family healthcare centers.

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. UXO clearance teams carried out 119 non-technical survey operations in 109 communities, confirming the presence of 71 areas contaminated with UXO. These areas included 45 within agricultural lands. In addition to urban areas (public squares and residential buildings), a mountain and a roadside. This proactive identification and mapping of contaminated areas helps protect civilians and guides UXO removal efforts.

UXO Removal

Based on non-technical surveys and reports from civilians, the explosive ordnance disposal teams carried out 139 removal and disposal operations of war remnants across 69 villages in northwest Syria. During these operations, they safely and successfully removed 138 unexploded ordnances. Rockets were the most frequently removed items, with 30 rockets, along with 28 projectiles, 28 grenades, 24 mortar rounds, 20 submunitions (cluster bombs), 6 fuses, as well as one missile and one landmine.

Breakdown of the unexploded ordnance removed by type



Breakdown of UXO Removal by Location

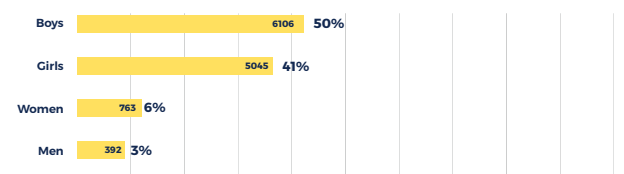
UXO removal operations included 85 operations in agricultural lands, and 34 operations in homes. Additionally, the operations covered areas including roadsides and in factories. The efforts of the survey and disposal teams enabled hundreds of farmers to safely return to their lands and resume their agricultural activities.

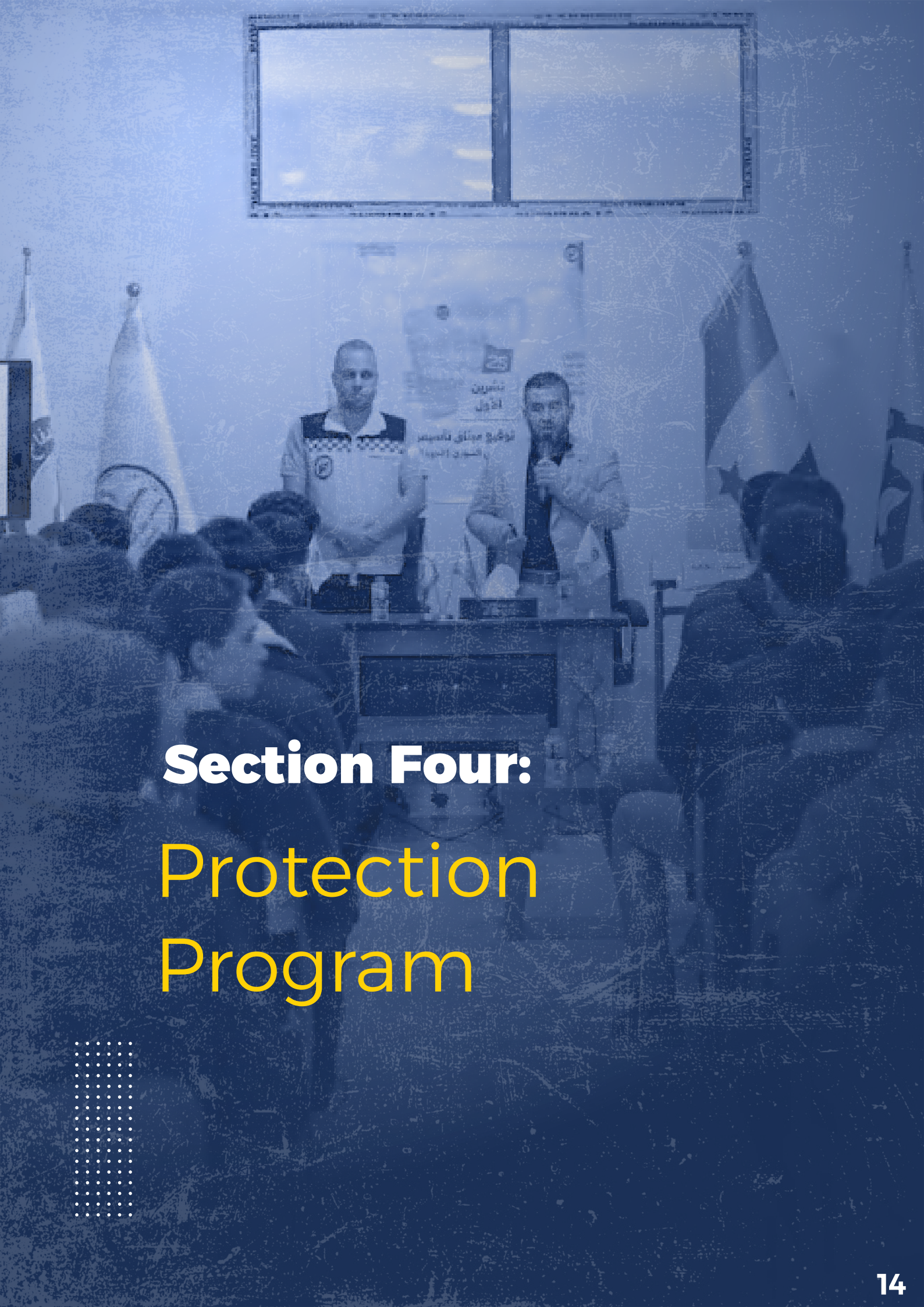
Mine Action Awareness Raising

Awareness-raising teams on the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance carried out 559 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.

A total of 12,306 people benefited from these awareness-raising activities, including 6,106 boys, and 5,045 girls. The awareness-raising sessions targeted children because of the great risks to their lives due to playing with or approaching these objects or unexploded ordnance. The sessions provided included 480 sessions in schools, including schools inside the camps.

Figure 9: No. of the beneficiaries of the awareness activities led by the UXO teams





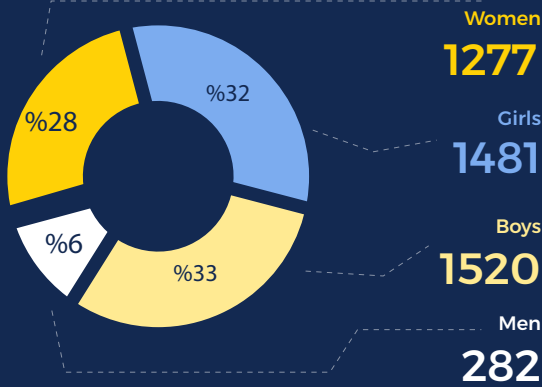
Section Four:
Protection
Program



Awareness Activities

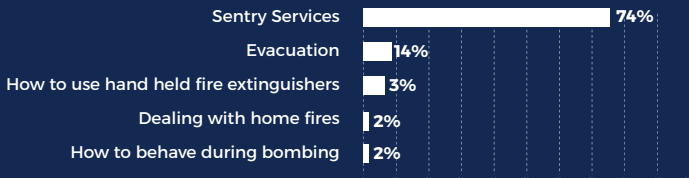
The protection program conducted 162 awareness sessions that were attended by 4,560 people, including 1,277 women, 1,520 boys, and 1,481 girls.

Figure 10: Number of beneficiaries of protection sessions by age and gender



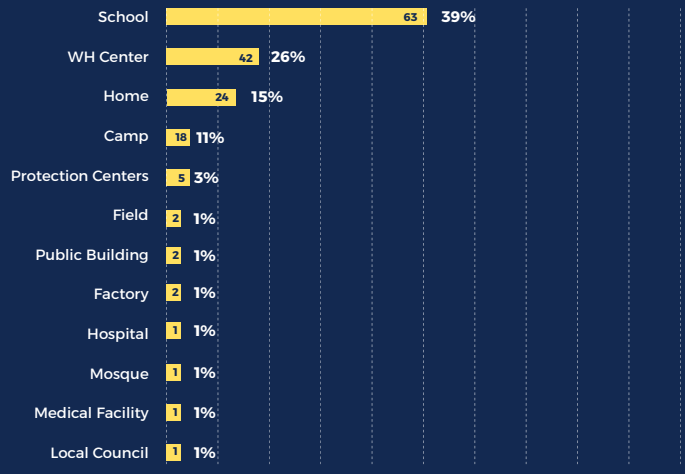
Seventy-four percent of the activities were dedicated to promoting the Sentry Service. The awareness activities also covered several key topics, including safe evacuation, the use of handheld fire extinguishers, and handling household fires.

Figure 11: Topics of awareness activities



The locations where protection sessions were held varied to ensure broader participation from all segments of society. Sixty-three percent of the sessions were conducted in schools, 26% were held in White Helmets centers and women and family healthcare centers, 15% of the activities were directed to civilians' homes, and 11% targeted IDPs in their camps.

Figure 14: Protection activities according to the location of the activity



Section Five:

Advocacy Activities



White Helmets 10 year anniversary

The advocacy team supported the work of media department and fundraising department with activities to mark the 10-year anniversary of the White Helmets, including through the publication of a joint statement of support from the International Donor Group, the transfer of the data of our international supporters and donors, and the transition to the new whitehelmets.org website. The transfer of the data and the website URL are the product of years of negotiations and planning between media, fundraising, advocacy, IT and operations and represent an important transition in the organizations' development. It also marked a shift in our relationship with the Syria Campaign, which remains a close partner but no longer runs our public outreach and fundraising functions.

Reports

We disseminated the final report from the Mine Action Working Group roundtable discussion in July, which outlines an urgent roadmap for integrating mine action across humanitarian sectors and limiting the risk of unexploded ordnance in northwest Syria.

Our contribution to a report on the use of double-tap strikes on first responders was published as part of Ukrainian rights monitoring group Truth Hounds report "Cruelty Cascade: Examining Russian Double-Tap Strikes in Ukraine". The Advocacy Department undertook internal interviews and research to provide a summary analysis of instances of double tap attacks and the development of our response to this risk.

The Advocacy Department sent a brief update about the military escalation in northwest Syria, including the increase in Russian airstrikes and resulting civilian casualties, to members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) ahead of the UNSC monthly briefing on Syria.

Events

White Helmets Director Raed Al Saleh participated in an event hosted by USAID OTI to mark their 30th anniversary. Raed highlighted the critical role collaboration with OTI played in the White Helmets' mission to save lives



Board Member Dalal Al Taher represented the White Helmets virtually at two events this month exploring the connections between conflict, gender and disaster risk reduction: a panel discussion organised by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and a public policy forum held at the International Peace Institute in New York, USA.

Abdulrahman Almajwas participated in a virtual event to launch a report produced by Ukrainian rights group TruthHounds dissecting the use of double tap attacks against first responders in Ukraine, their impact and legality in international humanitarian law. The White Helmets provided a short summary analysis of our response to double tap attacks for the report.

Diana Khayata represented the White Helmets at a two-day consultation meeting with the High Negotiation Committee in Berlin.

Partnerships

We signed MoU with McGill University's Policy Lab. Through this project, a group of 5-4 students studying towards a Masters in Public Policy will be given 4 months to develop research based on the question "What can be done to protect civilians and humanitarian aid workers from suicide drones in conflict zones?". The project kick off will begin in December and end in June 2025.

Future plans

The Advocacy Department is also planning for the following future activities

- CSO CW Conference in November
- European advocacy trip in November – Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Copenhagen
- Preparation for participation at a workshop on healthcare provision in contexts impacted by the use of explosive weapons in Brussels
- Public launch of our joint report with Child Guardians on attacks on schools in November
- Preparation for holding a side event on Mine Action in Cambodia on the sidelines of the Conference of States Parties for the Land Mine Convention
- A reception in Istanbul to mark the 10-year anniversary

