

IHL Watch

WHERE THERE IS WAR - THERE IS WAR CRIMES

Weekly Report – April 22 – 29, 2019

The week's most important IHL-related news and reports

Afghanistan

[Civilian casualties](#) from the Afghan conflict dropped by almost a quarter in the first three months of the year, amid freezing winter weather and a sharp fall in the number of suicide attacks, the United Nations said in a report on Wednesday. Overall civilian casualties fell to 1,773 in the January to March period, a 23 percent drop from the same period a year earlier, the latest report from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said. That was made up of 581 killed and 1,192 wounded.

Since the United Nations [started documenting](#) the civilian casualties in Afghanistan about ten years ago, the report revealed that more civilians are being killed at the hands of American and Afghanistan forces than Taliban and other insurgents.

2019 – [UNAMA Quarterly report](#)

Afghanistan [Independent Human Rights Commission](#) annual report shows that civilian casualties in 1397 solar year increased by 19 percent than the previous year of 1396. Beside expressing concern on killing and injuring of civilians, AIHRC said that the Taliban are responsible for over 50 percent of these casualties.

The protection of civilians is the obligation of all parties to the conflict, [stressed panelists](#) at a UN-backed televised discussion in southern province of Kandahar. They made an emotional appeal for the conflict to be brought to an end so that Afghan families could be spared the painful frequency of having to carry their relatives to rest. Human rights activists, Ulema and civil society representative called for dialogue and negotiations to lead to peace.

Iraq

Altogether two Islamic State (IS) militants and a civilian [were killed](#) Saturday in two incidents in the Iraqi provinces of Diyala and Salahudin, security sources said. In eastern Iraq, an army helicopter gunship conducted an airstrike, based on intelligence reports, on an IS hideout in al-Zour area in north of Diyala's provincial capital Baquba, which is located some 65 km northeast of Baghdad, Alaa al-Saadi from the provincial police told Xinhua.

Blackwater founder Erik Prince's new company is reportedly operating in Iraq, a country from which his former company was banned for killing civilians.

A subsidiary of Frontier Services Group (FSG), a security and logistics company Prince founded in Hong Kong, has set up shop in Basra, Iraq, BuzzFeed News [reported](#) Saturday, citing official documents. The subsidiary, the Dubai-based Frontier Logistics Consultancy DMCC, has officially registered as a foreign company with Iraq's Ministry of Trade, an official document from last year shows.

Israel/Palestine

The Palestinian Detainees' Committee has [reported](#), Wednesday, that Israeli soldiers repeatedly assaulted three children while abducting them and subjected them to torture during interrogation. The Committee stated that the soldiers abducted Bara' Yousef, 16, from Hijja town, near the northern West Bank city of Qalqilia, after storming his family's home late at night, and ransacking it, causing serious property damage.

Israeli soldiers [demolished](#), on Monday morning, a garage in Silwan town, south of the Al-Aqsa mosque, in occupied Jerusalem, and handed an order for the demolition of one home, the Wadi Hilweh Information Center in Silwan (Silwanic) has reported. The soldiers invaded the ath-Thoury neighborhood in Silwan, and demolished a Garage, owned by Kamal Shweiki, reportedly for being built without a permit.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) [strongly condemns](#) that the Israeli authorities stationed at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing arrested a patient's companion, from the Gaza Strip, while returning to the Gaza Strip.

Kashmir

Two Hizbul Mujahideen militants [were killed](#) in an operation on Thursday in the Anantnag Lok Sabha constituency, where two phases of elections are scheduled in the coming weeks. The police said Safdar Amin, 25, and Burhan Ahmad Ganaie alias Saifullah, 25, both residents of Anantnag district, were encircled by security forces at Bagender Mohalla in Bijbehara early in the morning.

Two terrorists affiliated with the jihadi group Hizb-ul-Mujahideen were killed in a gunfight with Indian security forces in the town of Bijbehara in south Kashmir early in the morning on Thursday in the northernmost Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, [reports](#) news portal *Risingkashmir*.

Libya

[Libya is Lurching Towards a Full Blown Civil War](#) – UN Dispatch

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, [evacuated](#) some 325 refugees from the Qaser Ben Gasheer detention centre in southern Tripoli amid deteriorating security and escalating violence. The relocation, carried out together with IOM, was triggered by reports on Tuesday of the use of armed violence against detainees who were protesting the conditions in which they were being held, with gunshots reported to have been fired in the air. While there were no bullet wounds, 12 refugees endured physical attacks that required hospital treatment.

A [violent attack](#) by fighters who opened fire on refugees and migrants at a detention centre on the outskirts of Tripoli highlights the urgent need to ensure civilians are protected and perpetrators are held to account, said Amnesty International after speaking to eye witnesses. Armed men raided the Qasr Ben Ghashir detention centre, south of Tripoli on 23 April and shot a number of the people being held there. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) at least 12 people were hospitalized as a result of their injuries.

The humanitarian situation has [greatly deteriorated](#) in and around the Libyan capital Tripoli, where "densely populated residential areas are gradually turning into battlefields", the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has said.

Hospitals are struggling with chronic shortages of medical supplies amid power outages and weakened water pumping stations, the aid agency said on Thursday, after three weeks of clashes around the capital between renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar's eastern forces and troops loyal to the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA).

[Voluntary Humanitarian Return From Conflict-Hit Libya: 72 Stranded Migrants Return to The Gambia](#) – Relief Web

[DTM Libya - Urban Migrants Situation Update - Rapid Assessment \(25 April 2019\)](#) – Relief Web

[Libya: Tripoli Clashes Situational Report No.17 \(As of 25 April 2019\)](#) – Relief Web

[Libya: Tripoli Clashes Situational Report No.18 As of 28 April 2019 \(covering 25-28 April\)](#) – Relief Web

Myanmar

Myanmar's army said on Wednesday that it [had captured](#) "seven or eight" outposts of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in northern Shan state, accusing the ethnic army of operating improperly in a controlled area during a four-month ceasefire that ends on April 30.

The deaths of three ethnic Rakhine men in Myanmar military custody and the secret cremation of their bodies has [provoked outrage](#), as fears over military impunity increase in the intensifying conflict with Rakhine rebels. The Arakan Army (AA) is fighting for more autonomy for ethnic Rakhine Buddhists in a state already infamous for the 2017 military crackdown against its Rohingya ethnic minority.

Two armed ethnic groups allied to the Arakan Army (AA) have [threatened](#) to join the fight against the Tatmadaw (military) if the fighting escalates, according to a statement by the groups. The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army issued the warning amid continuing clashes between the AA and military.

Fighting between the Myanmar Military and the Arakan Army (AA) has [reportedly continued](#) in Rakhine State with small-scale displacements registered in Pauktaw Township for the first time. According to the Rakhine State Government, more than 31,900 people have been displaced in seven townships (103 sites) in Rakhine State, as of 21 April. Local civil society organisations in Chin State reported that over 1,000 people have been displaced in Paletwa Township in five sites. This brings the total number of displaced people in Rakhine and Chin states since early December 2018 to more than 33,000 people.

Mali

Fighting [continues](#) in Mali four years after peace accords were signed, with at least 4,000 people killed since 2013 and 167 in the latest attack. People are taking to the streets calling for French and foreign troops to leave Mali.

Ivory Coast will more than [quadruple its troop presence](#) in the United Nations' peacekeeping mission in neighboring Mali to 800, President Alassane Ouattara said on Friday, making it one of the mission's leading contributors. The battalion of 650 troops will join the 150 Ivorian soldiers deployed in Mali, where security has deteriorated sharply in recent years due to attacks by jihadist groups with links to al Qaeda and Islamic State as well as ethnic clashes.

Al Qaida-linked terrorists in Mali [claimed responsibility](#) on Tuesday for an attack on a military base that killed at least 11 soldiers, saying it was revenge for the massacre of some 160 Fulani civilians last month, the SITE Intelligence Group said. Sunday's assault on a base in west-central Mali was the latest in a series of deadly raids by heavily armed jihadists, who have stepped up their attacks in central Mali and neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger in recent months

[SOHS 2018 Case Study: Mali](#) – Relief Web

Sudan

Sixteen protesters [were killed](#) one day Sudanese Defence Minister Awad Ibn Auf stepped down on Friday after a military coup that ousted the country's longtime leader—Omar al-Bashir—out of power. Protests over rising prices reportedly sparked al-Bashir's removal, but the demonstrators stayed outside the army's headquarters after al-

Bashir was deposed—claiming the coup’s leaders were “too close” to the former president. Sudan Doctors Committee, which has been spearheading the protests, said the protesters died “at the hands of regime forces and its shadow militias.”

Syria

The US-backed assault to drive the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from its Syrian capital Raqqa in 2017 killed more than 1,600 civilians, a figure 10 times what the coalition has acknowledged, according to a new report.

The [investigation](#), published by Amnesty International and the monitoring group Airwars on Thursday, urged top coalition members to "end almost two years of denial about the massive civilian death toll and destruction it unleashed in Raqqa".

At least 17 Syrian government troops and their allies [were killed](#) by two armed groups in Syria's northern province of Aleppo, a war monitor said. About 30 others were also wounded in the Saturday morning assaults by Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and its ally Hurras al-Deen, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The HTS-linked Ibaa news agency said the attacks killed more than 20 soldiers. It added the attacks were in retaliation for the bombardment by the Syrian and Russian militaries of rebel-held areas in recent days.

At least 17 people [were killed](#) on Wednesday in an explosion in the center of Jisr al Shughour, a rebel-held city in northwestern Syria, a day after heavy Russian air strikes in the vicinity, rescue workers and residents said. Several residential buildings collapsed as a result of the blast in Idlib province, near a road between the coastal city of Latakia and city of Aleppo.

On Sunday April 28 at 1:30 pm the Al Madiq Hospital in Northern Hama, Syria was [hit by an air strike](#) and heavily damaged. There were no injuries or casualties and the facility is now out of service. The hospital, which was supported by UOSSM until the end of March, was one of the few remaining operating hospitals in the region and served as a women and children’s specialty facility. The facility offered maternity services, child services and general surgeries serving approximately 8,000 beneficiaries a month. 5 civilians were also killed in the region during the same wave of airstrikes. UOSSM denounces attacks on medical facilities, aid workers and civilians. These attacks clearly constitute a war crime and perpetrators must be held accountable by the international community.

Ukraine

[Working in Conflict: The Critical Role Played by Enumerators](#) – Relief Web

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo on Thursday said that a lasting and durable ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine [remains an urgent priority](#). Speaking at a Security Council meeting on Ukraine, DiCarlo said that the UN commends the Ukrainian people on the peaceful conduct of the recent presidential election.

Ukrainian soldier Yuriy Konovod died in Donbas combat zone, as Ukrainian serviceman Sergiy Serdyuk reported on [Facebook](#).

Over the past 24 hours, on April 22 militants performed 14 attacks in Donbas combat zone, as the press office of Joint Forces Operation HQ reported on [Facebook](#). They used Minsk-banned 82mm mortars.

Militia forces violated ceasefire six times in Luhansk sector. They fired at the Ukrainian positions near Marinka from 82mm mortars. Militants used grenade launchers of various systems, heavy machine guns, automatic small arms, and snipers weapons near Hnutove. Militants also shot with grenades, heavy machine guns and small arms near Pavlopil. Besides, near Avdiivka and Opytne the enemy performed two attacks from heavy machine guns and small arms.

Militia forces attacked Ukraine's Armed Forces eight times in Donetsk sector. They shot three times at the defenders of Novooleksandrivka from 82mm mortars, grenade launchers of various systems, heavy machine guns, automatic small, and snipers arms. Illegal armed formations attacked from rocket-propelled grenades, heavy machine guns, and small arms twice near Zolote-4, from heavy machine guns and small arms near Popasna.

As a result of the attacks, one Ukrainian soldier died another three sustained injuries.

Ukrainian servicemen fired back. According to the intelligence, three militants were eliminated, seven – wounded. Besides, militants' IFV was damaged.

April 23, the militants opened fire near Hnutove from 120mm mortars, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and heavy machine guns. No casualties among Ukraine's Armed Forces reported.

Russia-led forces [mounted three attacks](#) on Ukrainian troops in Donbas, eastern Ukraine, no casualties were reported, the press center of the Joint Forces Operation's (JFO) headquarters has said. "On April 28, Russia-led forces violated the cease fire three times, twice of them using 82 mm mortars forbidden by the Minsk agreements. The enemy also shelled our defenders with grenade launchers of various systems and small arms.... No casualties among the servicemen are reported," JFO HQ said in the message, on its official page in the Facebook social network on Monday morning.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, UNHCR and the UN Children's Fund sent [five trucks carrying humanitarian aid](#) to the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas, according to the press service of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.

Yemen

Houthi rebels in Yemen [fired](#) 17 Zelzal-1 rockets at Saudi-led forces in Yemen on Friday, according to the Iranian Tasnim news agency. Saudi Arabia and its allies – including the Yemeni government, UAE and others – have been fighting Iranian-backed Houthis since 2015. The Houthis, equipped with Iranian technology, have fired numerous ballistic missiles at Saudi Arabia.

Yemeni security officials say seven family members [have been killed](#) in a bombing in the country's southern Dhale province. The officials say the seven, including two women, are from one family and were killed Saturday in the district of Qataba. The Houthi rebels say a suspected airstrike by a Saudi-led coalition hit the family vehicle, while officials from the internationally recognized government say Houthi shells killed the family.

The death toll from the war in Yemen has soared past 70,000, as rights groups warned landmines strewn across the country have caused hundreds of casualties and blocked aid. In the past five months alone 10,000 people have been killed, nudging the death toll past 70,000, a [report](#) by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (Acled) has reported.

In a [joint operation](#) by the drone and artillery units of the Yemeni army and Popular Committees on Sunday, the gatherings of the Saudi mercenaries in Najran were targeted and hit, according to the Arabic-language al-Masirah TV. The Yemeni forces also mounted artillery and missile attacks on the positions of Saudi-backed militants in Taiz on the same day, killing 9 and injuring 13 others. The attacks against the Saudi-led forces came in

retaliation for the continued massacre of civilians and destruction of Yemen's infrastructure by the coalition led by the Riyadh regime.

The Spokesperson for The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen Colonel Turki al-Maliki [asserted](#) that the coalition command takes any allegations concerning the participation of under-aged fighters with coalition member states seriously, adding that it conducts deep-dive investigations into all allegations, in accordance with legal obligations under International Humanitarian Law and related conventions on the protection of children.

[Civilian Impact Monitoring Report, January - March 2019](#) – Relief Web

[SOHS 2018 Case Study: Yemen](#) – Relief Web

Other

A former member of Gambia's military junta that seized power in a bloodless coup on July 22, 1994 [confessed](#) Wednesday to directing the executions of soldiers accused of being the ringleaders of a foiled counter-coup in November that year. Sanna Sabally admitted his involvement before the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission investigating the human rights violations of former President Yahya Jammeh. "I accept responsibility because I was the commander," said Sabally.

On April 25, 2019 the Inter-Ministerial Commission of Humanitarian Law, the Belgian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross [organized](#) the Conference: "War in cities: Searching for practical solutions to the contemporary challenges", in collaboration with the Belgian Society for International Law. During his speech, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense Didier Reynders will insist that countries further strengthen their commitment to the protection of civilians in city wars and the respect for international humanitarian law.

The Croatian Interior Ministry said on Wednesday that a Dutch citizen who was sentenced to 15 years in prison in absentia for war crimes in 1991 has been [extradited](#) to Zagreb. The ministry only gave his initials and year of birth, but local media reported that the man was 53-year-old Milorad Barac. *Novi List* newspaper reported that Barac fled to Serbia after the Croatian Army's 1995 military operation 'Storm', which defeated rebel Serbs, and then to the Netherlands, where he acquired Dutch citizenship.