

Fake 'Aleppo Genocide' Pics Spread Online amid Renewed Calls for 'Humanitarian' War on Syria

By [Mint Press](#)

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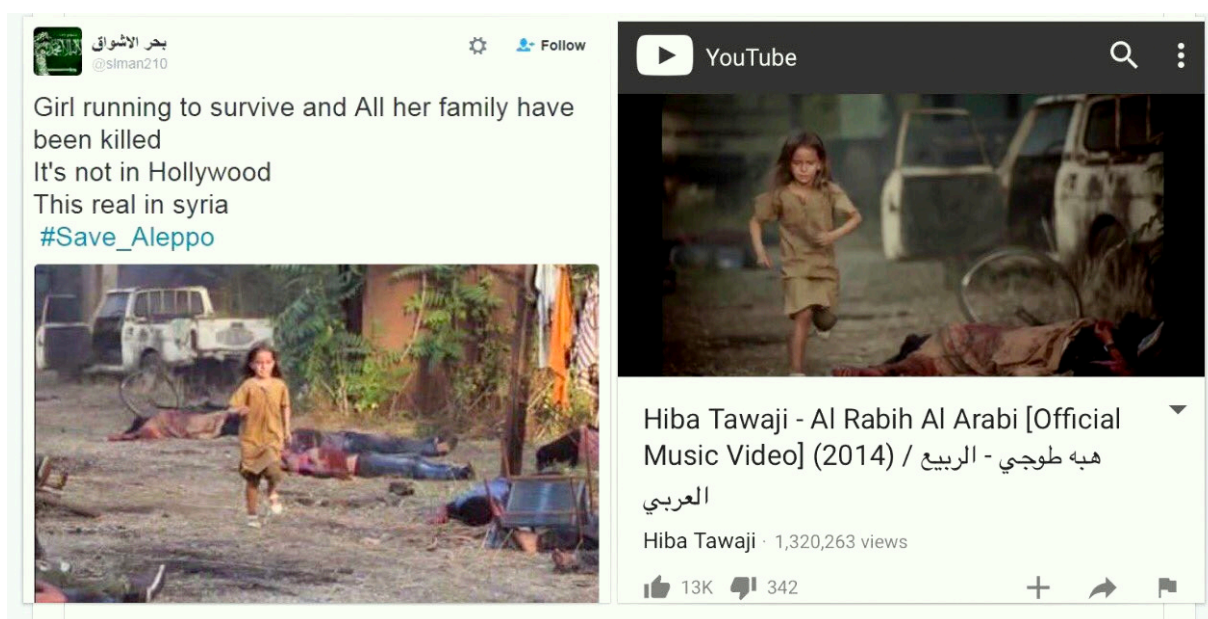
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'The atmosphere of misinformation only strengthens the Syrian regime's insistence that all Western media reports of its forces' atrocities are false,' noted one media analyst.

Propaganda about conditions in Aleppo, including photos recycled from other incidents in other places, is spreading online amid efforts to justify war on the Syrian government.

Even mainstream media sources and humanitarian organizations admit that reports of atrocities in the besieged Syrian city are often unverifiable rumors.



For example, on Dec. 9, the Agence France-Presse reported on the deaths of 82 civilians in Aleppo, [allegedly the victims of Syrian government forces](#).

"The U.N. human rights office said it had received reports of 'pro-government forces killing at least 82 civilians including 11 women and 13 children in four different neighbourhoods,'" Rupert Colville, the spokesman for the U.N. human rights office, told reporters in Geneva.

But the United Nations was unable or unwilling to stand by Colville's claims, adding in a separate statement provided later to AFP: "We hope, profoundly, that these reports are wrong, or exaggerated, as the situation is extremely fluid and it is very challenging to verify reports."

[Shira Rubin](#), a reporter at Vocativ, noted on Wednesday that images of atrocities in Aleppo are proliferating wildly on social media. However, Rubin added, “A large portion of those images are fake, sparking an uproar among those who argue the false posts diminish the reality of those suffering and fighting on the ground.”

Syrian geopolitical analyst Mimi Al Laham took to Twitter on Dec. 14 to point out that images purporting to show a terrorist attack came from music videos and an unrelated bombing in Pakistan:

[#fakenews](#) story about massacre of civilians in [#Aleppo](#) has no evidence so their using fake photos from music videos and Pakistan bombing pic.twitter.com/zBNOxu4K4x

— Partisangirl (@Partisangirl) [14 December 2016](#)

The frequent, pervasive rumors make it hard to know which sources of information are trustworthy, particularly as the U.N. and major NGOs frequently appear to exaggerate or even invent reports to support the push for war. Rubin added: *“The UN estimates that nearly 400,000 people have been killed since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, and more than half the population has been displaced. The numbers, which cannot be verified, have led to accusations and rumors as people online try to sort fact from fiction.”* Noting that these recycled images and false reports are spread “intentionally ... for propaganda purposes as well as by inadvertent social media users,” Rubin wrote, “The atmosphere of misinformation only strengthens the Syrian regime’s insistence that all Western media reports of its forces’ atrocities are false.” Even Eliot Higgins, a security analyst often called on by the mainstream media to promote a Western, pro-war viewpoint, admitted on Twitter on Dec. 13 that many images of alleged Aleppo atrocities appear to be recycled:

I’m not saying it’s not happening, but all the “Aleppo executions” images I’ve seen so far have been old and/or from elsewhere.

— Eliot Higgins (@EliotHiggins) [13 December 2016](#)

While attacks attributed to the Syrian government have been a frequent topic of reporting throughout the Syrian civil war, [atrocities by so-called “moderate” rebels](#), forces with the backing of the United States and its allies in Europe and the Middle East, rarely receive the same enthusiastic treatment in the mainstream media.

[Reports have even suggested that some of these groups](#) have blocked efforts to evacuate Aleppo’s civilian population, including Jabhat Al-Sham, an extremist group with both U.S. backing and ties to al-Qaida.

[Robert Fisk](#), a renowned foreign policy analyst, noted in a Dec. 14 report that while Syria’s leader, Bashar Assad, had undoubtedly carried out numerous human rights violations, the West also must be held accountable for its support of extremist groups involved in the conflict. He recounted one recent atrocity he heard from a refugee:

Only a few weeks ago, I interviewed one of the very first Muslim families to flee

eastern Aleppo during a ceasefire. The father had just been told that his brother was to be executed by the rebels because he crossed the frontline with his wife and son. He condemned the rebels for closing the schools and putting weapons close to hospitals. And he was no pro-regime stooge; he even admired Isis for their good behaviour in the early days of the siege.

Blaming atrocities in Syria solely on the Syrian government supports the agenda of the U.S. government, which seeks to overthrow the Syrian government and replace it with one more amenable to [Western interests and investment by fossil fuel companies](#). [WikiLeaks' archives of U.S. diplomatic cables show that the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia](#) have sought to unseat Assad since at least 2006.

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