

# **Syria - "Always remember us." We spoke to the last activists in Aleppo. They're waiting to die**

Tuesday 13 December 2016, by [McKERNAN Bethan](#) (Date first published: 13 December 2016).

## **Social media posts and texts show desperation as Bashar al-Assad's forces close in and threat of detention or execution for those suspected of supporting the opposition looms**

Around 100,000 civilians and rebels are thought to be left in the slivers of east Aleppo still under opposition control as the Syrian army and allied militias close in.

In the past few days, civilian activists including doctors and teachers who have kept journalists abreast of developments inside the city's siege barricades have sent increasingly fearful messages as the reality of what awaits them once Syrian President Bashar al-Assad fully retakes the city sets in.

They also expressed anger at the international community for not doing more to implement a ceasefire in the fighting or pressure the Russian and Syrian governments into stopping the bombings that have decimated the rebel enclave since September.

In other places recaptured by the government in the civil war, human rights monitors say the Syrian army and foreign Shia militias have carried out brutal attacks on civilians, arbitrarily executing men and boys and in some cases burning the bodies.

*"Anyone who knows anything about the Assad regime should know what to expect. Death will be a wish for those captured and deemed [to be] opposition, weather [sic] military or civil,"* one activist wrote in a WhatsApp message on Tuesday.

An August report from Amnesty International estimated that 18,000 people have been tortured and died in regime prisons since the beginning of the war in 2011. Thousands more remain unaccounted for.

*"Families got together awaiting death together. This is what's happening,"* another wrote on Monday.

While perhaps the revolution's greatest communication tool since supply lines were cut off by government forces in August, social media has also opened Aleppo's rebel activists up to criticism.

They have been accused of faking accounts of the damage caused by aerial attacks, and of covering up the true intentions of rebel fighters - many of whom are thought to be hardline extremists with links to al-Qaeda.

Internet service in east Aleppo was reportedly out for several hours overnight on Monday.

While the fate of many activists and civilians *The Independent* has been in contact with in the past

few months remains unknown, below are some of the last communications sent from inside the last rebel enclave before the city inevitably falls.

**Ameen al-Halabi, photographer**

"I am waiting to die or be captured by the Assad regime... Pray for me and always remember us."

**Bana Alabed**, a seven-year-old who tweets from Aleppo with the help of her English speaking mother Fatemah. Bana added that her father had been injured.

Bana Alabed @AlabedBana

*Final message - people are dying since last night. I am very surprised I am tweeting right now & still alive. - Fatemah #Aleppo*

*1:49 PM - 12 Dec 2016*

**Abdulkafi al-Hamdo**, teacher and activist

@Mr.Alhamdo @Mr\_Alhamdo

*this is a call and might be the last call.*

*Save Aleppo people. Save my daughter and other children. #StandWithAleppo*

*11:56 AM - 12 Dec 2016*

**Lina Shamy**, activist

*"To everyone who can hear me, we are being exposed to a genocide in east Aleppo. This may be my last message. More than 50,000 civilians who rebelled against the dictator al-Assad are threatened with execution or dying under bombing. There is no safe zone, no life... save Aleppo."*

**Monther Etaky**, activist

Monther Etaky @montheretaky

*I would like to thank all the humans whose stood for the humanity with our case, i will never forget you if we passed to the other life*

*12:54 AM - 13 Dec 2016*

**Bilal Abdul Kareem**, American journalist and activist

*"I am not coming to you at this time as a representative of On The Ground news, I'm coming to you as an average person from besieged Aleppo... we may not be able to send any more messages. To the Muslim ummah [community] that is out there... you really blew it this time... You had the opportunity to fly in here with a cape and help these poor people."*

**Zouhir al-Shimale**, journalist

Zouhir\_AlShimale @ZouhirAlShimale

*#Aleppo yesterday & over the past months that draw us to die or on the edge of death every minute.#SOS #SaveAleppo <https://twitter.com/MiddleEastEye/status/808362003458912256> ...*

*8:57 AM - 13 Dec 2016*

**Bethan McKernan**, Beirut

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**P.S.**

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<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/aleppo-conflict-latest-waiting-to-die-last-messages-from-east-aleppo-s-activists-as-the-revolution-a7471641.html>