



Statement

7 February 2018

Immediate International Action to Stop the Escalation of Violence in Syria is Demanded

Rethink Rebuild Society (RR) strongly condemns the escalation in violence witnessed across Syria over the past weeks, and calls for immediate international action to protect civilians and stop the attacks waged.

The Syrian regime has dramatically escalated its military campaign on besieged Eastern Ghouta and on Idlib, both supposed de-escalation zones, over the past weeks. Just since Tuesday, [regime bombardment](#) in Eastern Ghouta - including the towns of Duma, Erbin, Marj and Hazrama - devastatingly killed more than 80 civilians with many more injured. According to the Syrian Observatory, more than 335 people have been [killed](#) since the Syrian regime escalated its attacks on the besieged enclave six weeks ago. Moreover, emerging reports over the past few days have indicated the regime's use of chlorine gas on civilians, to which the UN only raised concern. The inhumane escalation adds devastation to already besieged residents facing scarcity of food, fuel, and medication. The regime's escalation has in turn pushed rebel forces in Eastern Ghouta to retaliate in targeting regime-held areas with mortar fire, which [killed](#) more than 3 civilians in Bab Touma in Damascus.

Russian and Syrian regime airstrikes pounded Syria's northern Idlib province particularly after rebel forces shot down a Russian SU-25 jet. Air raids [struck](#) the towns of Kafr Nubl, Maasran, Saraqeb, Maarat al Numan, and Idlib city, with tens of people dead and injured. Aid workers have [reported](#) attacks on civilian spaces - including air raids on two vital [hospitals](#) - with many reported still trapped under rubble. Medics have also [reported](#) chlorine gas attacks on the town of Saraqeb on Sunday night. Current clashes follow a military campaign shun by Syrian regime and allied forces that seized territory in Idlib including the Abu Dhoor military airbase. Since December 25, more than 220 civilians have been [killed](#) including 65 children.

Also in Syria's north, Turkey along with proxy Free Syrian Army forces have waged an assault on Afrin where People's Protection Units forces and a decentralised semi-autonomous government are placed. The [fighting](#) has left more than 140 people dead and 310 injured. Turkey's pushing of Syrian opposition forces to wage a war in pursuit of its own national security interests threatens to further aggravate Arab-Kurdish ethnic tensions, and places more civilians at risk at a time when nation-wide de-escalation is urged.

It is questionable how any political progress can be made amid such levels of killing and destruction, with conflict parties continuing to pursue their objectives through violence over political dialogue and negotiations that reduce the humanitarian crisis. Instead of relieving the humanitarian situation, the so-called de-escalation zones have been prevented of aid access and have sustained continued attacks by the Syrian regime and its allies. While rhetoric of peace is provided, involved foreign powers are increasingly shaping the conflict's end in pursuit of their interests at the expense of Syrian human life and destruction.

The UN has called for a one-month truce to relieve the situation. We call on the UK Government to back up this demand with clear condemnation and rejection of this escalation in violence if it is serious in pushing for peace in Syria. Reports of regime chemical weapons use is alarmingly concerning and must be immediately responded to with serious investigations that can hold perpetrators accountable. RR asks the UK to call for an urgent UN session to address the escalation of violence in Syria and mount pressure on conflict aggressors to end the violence and spare human life in order to create a climate for genuine and sincere political negotiations to end the conflict.

ENDS

For further information and press enquiries, please contact 07510007187, or email: bilal@rrsoc.org

Rethink Rebuild Society has established itself as a non-profit organisation that acts as an umbrella for the Syrian community in Manchester, and endeavours to clarify the Syrian cause to its audience in the UK and the wider public.