

【Statement】

Northwest Syria : Urging inhumane attacks endangering the lives of civilians to cease immediately

Since the end of April 2019, Assad regime air strikes in Idlib, Northern Hama, and the suburb of west Aleppo of the Syrian Arab Republic have continued. These attacks, carried out by Syrian and Russian (an ally nation) war planes are threatening the lives of unarmed Syrians.

Based in Tokyo, non-profit organization Stand with Syria Japan (SSJ) strongly condemns the murderous attacks endangering civilians and calls upon the Syrian and Russian governments to immediately cease attacks and abide by international laws.

Idlib, where attacks have been especially gruesome, has now become a district of approximately three million people, most of whom are civilians from other cities who came seeking for refugeⁱ. Today, civilians seeking refuge in Idlib and other parts of northwest Syria are left with nowhere to flee. Along with the fact that Idlib is the last remaining base for the rebels' activity, there are two factors behind scarce access to safe haven. Firstly, it is alarmingly dangerous for an evacuee to migrate to areas taken over by the regime; arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of civilians have continued in places "regained" from rebels by the Assad regimeⁱⁱ. Secondly, escaping abroad is almost impossible; as attacks have persisted in northwest Syria, the only other accessible option is the Turkish border. However, that option is no longer available as Turkey has closed its bordersⁱⁱⁱ. Hence, in homes where civilians have no place to flee, air strikes persist. The destruction is devastating. In the past month since the end of April 2019, at least 160 civilian deaths have been reported^{iv}. Attacks are not simply air strikes but are inhumane conducts of malice. Attacks on medical facilities, which are prohibited by international law, is an example, with more than twenty-four medical facilities in the Idlib province destroyed^v. Incendiary weapons are being used to wipe out agricultural land^{vi}. Along with depriving people of their vital source of sustenance, such attacks severely impact the mental well-being of farmers.

At the official event we hosted on May 25th 2019, upon talking to a Syrian journalist in Kafranbel, Idlib province, SSJ is now fully aware of the Syrian and Russian government attacks on civilian homes and medical facilities, the usage of cluster bombs, and the reality that unarmed civilians are being targeted and have fallen victim to such attacks^{vii}.

Destruction is spreading, therefore, immediate support from the international community and civil society is desperately needed. In view of the circumstances, we, SSJ, following our mission and sense of humanity, call for the actions below.

Requests

(1) Syrian Government, Russian Government

Calls upon the Syrian government and the Russian government to cease attacks involving civilians, as well as obey the international law

(2) Syrian Government

Calls upon the Syrian government to stop unjust restraining of civilians, also, guarantee safe evacuation routes

(3) Turkish Government

Calls upon the Turkish government to open the Idlib-Turkish border, and protection of civilians fleeing attacks

(4) Rebel Forces

Calls upon rebel forces to not involve civilians in warfare, also, guarantee safe evacuation routes

(5) United Nations, International Community

Calls upon the United Nations, International community to recall the establishment purpose regarded in the Charter of United Nations, "maintenance of international peace and security", put a stop to the clear attacks on Syrian civilians, and immediately take necessary steps to protect civilians whose lives are at risk.

END

For further enquiries and information contact info@standwithsyria.jp.com

Stand with Syria Japan (SSJ)

We are an official non-profit organization recognized by the Japanese government that focuses on a series of Syrian crises that have been continuing since 2011. We are currently operating three projects: public awareness raising, advocacy, humanitarian assistance inside Syria. Our core policy is to not only on the state of the conflict or those of the regime, but to also shed light on the Syrian Civilians facing horrifying threats of the crisis. SSJ is a strictly non-profit, apolitical, non-religious organization led purely by the "Sense of Humanity".

i Peter Beaumont, 2019, "Idlib casualties mount as assault leaves aid efforts in the balance," The Guardian, 29 May,

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/may/29/idlib-casualties-mount-as-assault-leaves-aid-efforts-in-the-balance-syrian-regime-civilians?CMP=share_btn_link> (Last Access June 1st 2019)

ii Human Rights Watch, *Syria: Detention, Harassment in Retaken Areas*, 21 May 2019,

<<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/21/syria-detention-harassment-retaken-areas>> (Last Access June 1st 2019).

iii Carlotta Gall and Hwaida Saad, 2019, "Huge Wave of Syrians Flee Intensified Bombing on Last Rebel-Held Province," *The New York Times*, 30 May,

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/30/world/middleeast/syrian-bombing.html>> (Last Access June 1st 2019).

iv United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND DEPUTY EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, URSULA MUELLER: Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 28 May 2019, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/assistant-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-deputy-emergency-5>> (Last Access June 1st 2019).

v Josie Ensor, 2019, "Syria and Russia bomb hospitals in Idlib after they were given coordinates in hope of preventing attacks," *The Telegraph*, 30 May, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/05/30/syria-russia-bomb-hospitals-idlib-given-coordinates-hope-preventing/> (Last Access June 1st 2019).

vi BBC, 2019, "Syrian military 'burning farmland in rebel-held north'," 29 May, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48444596>> (Last Access June 1st 2019).

vii Stand with Syria Japan Official NPO Recognition Event "Japan to Syria – Nurturing Hope for the Future,"

<https://standwithsyria.jp.com/2019/05/11/ssj_2019specialevent01/> (Last Access June 1st 2019).