

The Humanitarian NGOs working in and responding to Northwest Syria are profoundly distressed by the recent spate of attacks in our operational areas, particularly those targeting innocent civilians, infrastructure, and markets.

These attacks come at a time when local communities are grappling with the aftermath of the earthquake that has affected Southern Turkiye and Northwest Syria and a concurrent cholera outbreak, both of which have profoundly affected people who continue to suffer from psychological trauma and the loss of loved ones. At the same time, humanitarian efforts are being further stretched to their limits. Another displacement in Northwest Syria will only further impede these efforts and result in extended damage to communities.

According to media reports and local sources, several air strikes originated from the warplanes of Russia and the Government of Syria, which began on Sunday morning, June 25, most notably the targeting of the al-Hal market in the town of Jisr al-Shughur located in the city of Idleb, leaving a massacre that killed 9 and injured over 30 wounded, in the initial count.

Several other airstrikes took place on the outskirts of the western city of Idleb, targeting residential buildings and farms, in addition to artillery shelling that targeted the village of Efes, east of the city of Idleb, and similar shelling on the outskirts of the town of Sarmin, the village of Sarja, and Jabal al-Arba'in to the south of Idleb at the same time.

Attacks had escalated last week, on Wednesday, June 21, which coincided with the 20th round of the Astana Process talks on Syria was officially pronounced as the last one, according to Kanat Tumysh, deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan. The attacks come when Eid al-Adha is just days away, and the UNSCR renewal is less than 2 weeks away.

The pledges made at the Brussels Conference to support early recovery cannot be implemented amidst this resurgence of violence on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Northwest Syria. This is a post-earthquake time, with people and communities being preoccupied with securing livelihoods while struggling with the losses of loved ones and the overall devastation.

Political disagreements and failures must not further harm the already exhausted communities. It is incumbent on all parties involved to ensure that civilians' rights to live in peace are not compromised. The safe return of the affected population currently residing in Northwest Syria remains a paramount concern.

We call upon the international community, UN member states, and the Arab League, especially countries currently normalizing relations with the Government of Syria, to exert greater pressure to halt these attacks. We insist that all parties to the conflict honour their commitments under international humanitarian law and immediately cease the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian structures.

We also urge host countries to consider the recent escalations in violence when making decisions about refugee returns to Syria; the situation remains perilously unstable, particularly in the northwest.

This statement serves as a plea to the international community: We must not allow the right of civilians to celebrate in peace to be denied. The time to act is now.

