



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR THE SYRIA CRISIS

**Statement by Mark Cutts, Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, on the Mounting Civilian Casualties in the Idleb Area**

*Gaziantep, 22 July 2019*

The nightmare in Idleb is getting worse. Today saw one of the deadliest attacks on civilian areas that we have seen since the upsurge in fighting began almost three months ago.

At least 59 civilians were killed and over 100 women, children and men were injured, many of them critically, when a succession of deadly airstrikes hit multiple locations in southern Idleb today.

The worst attack was on a popular public market in Ma'arat al-Nu'man this morning, which left at least 39 dead, including eight women and five children. This figure is likely to rise further as more bodies are discovered.

Some of the dead bodies were torn into pieces or burnt beyond recognition. Many of the victims were women and children, some of them suffering the most horrific injuries. Rescue workers have been working all day pulling people out from under the rubble. Many remain buried. The search for survivors was continuing as darkness fell.

Dedicated and courageous health workers and humanitarian staff are doing their best to help, with support from the United Nations, but in this environment no one is safe. Yet another rescue worker and one more hospital employee were among the dead today.

Also in Idleb this evening, a local market in the town of Saraqeb came under attack, resulting in eight reported deaths, including one woman and four children. And in Aleppo city, seven civilians reportedly lost their lives after their neighborhoods were struck by mortar shells. Added together, today was certainly one of the deadliest days since the end of April. It marks another shocking escalation in the ever worsening conflict in north-west Syria.

Today's incidents come just one week after an attack on another public market in the town of Maar Shurin in the Idleb countryside which took the lives of 12 civilians and injured 20 more. This is all part of a wave of new attacks on critical civilian infrastructure across north-west Syria in recent months, including health facilities, schools, water plants, and bakeries. Over four hundred civilian deaths have been documented by the United Nations.

There is nothing that can justify such attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Such attacks must stop immediately. There are three million civilians in the Idleb area who remain trapped with nowhere else to go. More than a million of them are children. These people must be protected. The world cannot turn its back on them. We continue to call on the parties to the conflict to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians from harm, and to protect and facilitate the work of all humanitarian workers.