

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
RELIEF COORDINATOR, STEPHEN O'BRIEN**

**STATEMENT ON SYRIA**

I am horrified and sickened by the news of civilians killed today by air strikes that hit two settlements where displaced people had sought sanctuary, in Idleb Governorate, northern Syria. Initial reports indicate that at least 30 people were killed, and over 80 injured, among them many women and children, and dozens of tents were destroyed or badly damaged.

Continued fighting and airstrikes mean that vulnerable, frightened children, women and men have nowhere safe to go. Already this year, thousands of Syrians have been forced to flee their homes, seeking safety from bombs, shelling and other violence, while millions are still trapped without access to food or medical care.

International humanitarian law very clearly sets out the responsibilities of warring parties to protect civilians and to take every possible measure to avoid places where civilians are living and where they are being looked after by humanitarians. Modern military technology means that there is little room for error.

If this obscene attack is found to be a deliberate targeting of a civilian structure, it could amount to a war crime.

I call for an immediate, impartial and independent investigation into this deadly incident. All parties to this appalling conflict should understand that they will one day be held accountable for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

5 May 2016  
New York

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