

Syria: Guterres concerned over reported attacks in Idlib, calls for 'full investigation'

United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres expressed deep concern over airstrikes that reportedly targeted a village in northern Idlib last week, killing dozens – including children.

“He calls for a full investigation into the attacks, especially allegations that there was also a second strike targeting first responders, to establish accountability,” [said](#) his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, in a statement on Sunday.

Mr. Dujarric noted that the Secretary-General recalled that Idlib is part of the de-escalation agreement reached in Astana, and called on its guarantors “to uphold their commitments.”

“The Secretary-General underscores the precarious plight of the estimated 2.3 million people in Idlib governorate, 60 per cent of whom are civilians displaced by the conflict from other areas, most recently from Eastern Ghouta,” he continued.

Mr. Guterres calls for “an immediate cessation of hostilities and urges all stakeholders to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure,” the statement concluded.

Central Asia bloc has important role in “peace, stability and prosperity” beyond region, says Deputy UN chief

At its annual heads of State summit on Sunday, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed stressed that the political, economic and security power of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have impacts beyond the region.

Noting that the SCO represents “more than half of humanity,” Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed [said](#) the eight-nation bloc is assuming even greater importance whose “expanded range of activities will have implications for peace, stability, and prosperity across the region and far beyond.”

"You are playing a growing role in shaping the global agenda, based on cooperation and dialogue," Ms. Mohammed told the group in Qingdao, China.

The "Shanghai 5" was established in 1996 for border peace between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia and Tajikistan. It has since metamorphosed into the SCO, which now also includes Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

"The world needs a recommitment to multilateralism, and we need it now," Ms. Mohammed stressed.

"Regional and international threats to security and stability, from transnational crime to climate change to violent extremism and terrorism, cannot be resolved by any one country alone," she added.

The deputy UN chief called the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the SCO's Development Strategy 2025 "our blueprints for joint action."

She flagged last year's SCO joint communique as underscoring the 2030 Agenda's implementation and as an important step toward strengthening cooperation in mutual sectors.

"Your joint commitment to support the promotion of innovative technology; to sharing experiences in the formulation and implementation of national development strategies, as well as to working together towards the creation of a favourable investment and business climate are crucial and we are here to support you in those endeavours," Ms. Mohammed said.

"To ensure a fair globalization, we must ensure nations are able to have the necessary domestic resources and capacities to steer their economies and development agendas towards our common goals as outlined by the 2030 Agenda and the [Paris Agreement](#)," she added.

The Deputy Secretary-General commended the bloc's commitment to counter regional threats and its revitalization of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group as a strong contribution to support the Afghan-led peace process.

Turning to cross-border cooperation, she hailed the Belt and Road initiative as "promoting connectivity, economic prosperity and diplomatic ties across the region."

"The UN continues to support stronger collaboration between developing countries by catalyzing, brokering and facilitating South-South cooperation across many spheres," she asserted.

Ms. Mohammed noted that UN-SCO relations, based on the 2010 Joint Declaration, "provide a solid foundation for future cooperation to benefit of people of this region and the world."

"Let us take every opportunity, starting with the first-ever UN Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies later this month, to build and strengthen our partnership and cooperation at the global, regional and local level," she said.

UN chief welcomes Taliban's temporary truce announcement, encourages all parties to embrace 'Afghan-owned peace'

United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has welcomed the Taliban's announcement of a three-day partial ceasefire during the Eid al-Fitr holiday, urging all parties concerned "to seize this opportunity and embrace an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process."

This follows the recent announcement by the Afghan Government that it would begin a seven-day ceasefire on 12 June, the 27th day of Ramadan, and run to Eid-ul-Fitr.

"The Secretary-General strongly believes that there is no military solution to this conflict and that only a political settlement can bring an end to the suffering in Afghanistan," his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, [said](#) in a statement issued Saturday.

On behalf of Mr. Guterres, he reiterated the UN's commitment to "supporting the people and Government of Afghanistan in this important endeavor."

UN humanitarian coordinator condemns Central African Republic hospital attack 'inhuman and unworthy'

Weapon-toting intruders at a hospital in war torn Central African Republic (CAR) drew grave condemnation from the United Nations humanitarian coordinator on the ground, calling it "an outrageous violation of international humanitarian law."

Armed groups entered the Regional Hospital of Bambari in the city centre on Saturday, after previously threatening medical staff and patients Thursday and looting nine humanitarian organizations as well as the National Refugee Commission during the month of May.

“I hold these armed groups directly responsible for this intrusion for any medical complications and life-threatening conditions of patients” Humanitarian Coordinator Najat Rochdi [stated](#) Saturday.

Recalling that at in accordance with the principle of humanity and impartiality, health care is granted to all patients, she called their actions “inhuman and unworthy.”

For five years, conflict has plagued the country – with violence intensifying over the past year.

According to preliminary estimates, since this incident, relatives have removed some 30 vulnerable patients from their hospital beds, depriving them of medical care.

Ms. Rochdi stressed that civilian hospitals care for the wounded and sick, and should under no circumstances be attacked. She emphasized that they must be respected and protected by the conflict’s parties.

This latest incident constitutes an additional challenge for humanitarian action in Bambari, particularly for medical assistance.

“The population is once again ‘held hostage’ by the impact of clashes between armed groups since May 14. Populations are being cut off from the assistance they are so much need in for,” deplored Ms. Rochdi.

“I call upon the perpetrators of these acts to put the interest of the population above their differences,” stressed the Humanitarian Coordinator.

‘We face a global emergency’ over oceans: UN chief sounds the alarm at G7 Summit event

Unless there is a change of course, the amount of plastic waste in the world’s oceans will outweigh the fish that live in them, by 2050, said the United Nations Secretary-General on Saturday, declaring that the world now faces a “global emergency” over the oceans.

“The facts are clear. Our oceans are a mess,” said António Guterres at an outreach event, that was part of the Group of Seven – or G7 – Summit of industrialized nations, taking place over two days, in Charlevoix, Canada.

The G7 group of advanced economies, consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

“Plastic waste is now found in the most remote areas of the planet. It kills marine life and is doing major harm to communities that depend on fishing and tourism,” he added.

Pointing out that one mass of plastic in the Pacific is now bigger than France, Mr. Guterres welcomed the G7 Plastics Charter, agreed on Saturday, which is being seen by some observers as a Paris-style watershed moment for cleaning up ocean garbage, referencing the 2015 Agreement on climate change.

“But we all need to do so much more,” Mr. Guterres underscored, “not just on plastic waste but on all ocean issues.”

“Make no mistake, we are in a battle. And we are losing on every front,” he stressed.

The UN chief painted a picture of fish stocks being crippled by overfishing, vast coastal dead zones from pollution and untreated waste being discharged into the sea.

“And, to compound these issues, we have the growing impacts of climate change,” he asserted.

Ocean acidification is disrupting the marine food chain and record-level ocean temperatures are killing coral reefs and creating fiercer, more frequent storms.

Moreover, 40 per cent of the world’s population lives within 100 kilometres of a coast – leaving them vulnerable to storms, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

Low-lying island nations and many coastal cities are in jeopardy of inundation, the Secretary-General spelled out.

“Thankfully,” continued Mr. Guterres “we have a battle plan.”

“Our guide is the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], and especially Goal 14 with its 10 targets from addressing marine pollution and acidification, to ending overfishing and protecting ecosystems,” he elaborated.

“Our legal framework is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – the world’s ‘constitution for the oceans,’” he added.

Mr. Guterres noted that while last year’s Ocean Conference at UN Headquarters registered more than 1,300 commitments and partnerships, none of the initiatives and declarations are worth anything “unless we accept that we face a global emergency.”

“And that is why I am here today. To sound the alarm. To inject a sense of real urgency in your deliberations and decision-making,” he said.

“Your leadership is needed now, more than ever – on combatting land-based pollution; on creating marine protected areas; on reviving fisheries; on building the resilience of coastal ecosystems and communities, and,

especially, on climate change," he added.

He flagged that if our seas and oceans are not protected, and we lose the battle against climate change, all the assumptions on which our policy-making has been based "will be worthless".

"Take seriously these threats to our global environment and understand that our collective future and security is at stake," he concluded.