

'Monstrous, cowardly' attack on Syrian evacuees a show of shameless disregard for human life – UN aid chief

16 April 2017 – Expressing "horror" at the attack on civilians evacuating from the besieged Syrian towns of Foah and Kefraya, the United Nations humanitarian chief has called on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international law and protect civilians.

"The perpetrators of such a monstrous and cowardly attack displayed a shameless disregard for human life," Stephen O'Brien, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in a [statement](#).

"International humanitarian law is very clear: warring parties must protect civilians and distinguish between military and civilian targets," he underscored.

Some 5,000 people were travelling from the two towns to Government-controlled areas when an [explosion occurred near their convoy as it passed Rasheedin](#), western Aleppo, yesterday. Scores of people have been killed and many injured.

In the aftermath of the attack, humanitarian organizations, including the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and UN partners, are providing assistance to the injured, including transferring them to hospitals.

The evacuation from Foah and Kefraya was a part of an agreement, popularly referred to as the "Four Towns" Agreement meant to facilitate humanitarian access to the people in need in those besieged towns. In addition to these two places in Idlib, the Agreement also includes Madaya and Zabadani in rural Damascus.

In the statement, the UN humanitarian chief further noted that while the UN was not involved in the agreement or evacuation process, it stands ready to scale up its support to evacuees.

"In that regard, I call on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and to facilitate safe and unimpeded access for the UN and its partners to bring life-saving help to those in need," he said.

Also in the statement, Mr. O'Brien, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, expressed his deepest sympathies to the families of those killed and injured.