

UN chief calls for 'immediate end' to escalation of fighting in southwestern Syria, as thousands are displaced

The UN Secretary-General on Friday expressed his grave concern for thousands of civilians caught up in an escalation of fighting across southwestern Syria, close to the border with Jordan.

In [a statement](#) released by his Spokesman, António Guterres, said that an uptick in conflict involving both ground offensives and aerial bombardments, "had resulted in the displacement of thousands of civilians, the majority of whom are moving towards the Jordanian border."

"The Secretary-General is also concerned at the significant risks these offensives pose to regional security", the statement continued.

According to news reports, Syrian government forces went on the offensive against opposition held territory on Friday in the region, which is of major strategic concern, close to the border of both Jordan and Israel, where tensions over the Golan Heights provoked clashes between Israeli defence forces and Syrian troops just a few weeks ago.

The UN chief called for "an immediate end to the current military escalation" and urged all parties to the more than seven-year war, "to respect their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure."

"Recalling the de-escalation and ceasefire arrangements that have provided relative calm in southwestern Syria over the past year, the Secretary-General urges all to exercise restraint and uphold these commitments as a matter of priority," the statement concluded.