

UN chief 'deeply alarmed' over military offensive in south-west Syria

Expressing “deep alarm” over increased hostilities in southwestern Syria and its “devastating” toll on civilians, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called for an immediate cessation of the military operations.

In a [statement](#) by his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres called on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights laws, protect civilians and facilitate safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access.

“All stakeholders must immediately stop attacks directed against medical and educational facilities and put in place security conditions for UN cross-border humanitarian deliveries to resume without further delay,” he said.

In the statement, the UN chief also recalled that the south-west area of Syria is part of the July 2017 de-escalation agreement between Jordan, Russia and the United States, and called on its guarantors to uphold their commitments.

The Secretary-General also urged the international community “to unite to put an end to this expanding conflict,” which risks further de-stabilizing the region and worsening the deep humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighboring states.

He also called on all concerned to focus on moving the political process forward building on the recent consultations in Geneva.

Into its eighth year, the conflict in Syria continues to exact a [terrible toll](#) on the country’s civilians.

[According](#) to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), over 13 million people across the war-torn country are in need of humanitarian assistance, including close to 3 million people in need trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, where they are exposed to grave protection threats.

Over half of the population has been forced from their homes, and many people have been displaced multiple times. Children and youth comprise more than half of the displaced, as well as half of those in need of humanitarian assistance.