

# [Urgent international action needed to stop soaring violence in war-torn Syria, stresses UN rights chief](#)

10 February 2018 – The United Nations human rights chief on Saturday called for urgent international action to protect civilians caught up in the Syrian conflict, which, he said, saw one of its bloodiest periods with hundreds of lives lost in a wave after wave of deadly airstrikes.

The no-holds-barred nature of this assault is evidenced by reports that at least nine medical facilities, six of them in Idlib and three in eastern Ghouta, were hit by airstrikes, said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, in a news release issued by his office ([OHCHR](#)).

Even by Syria's atrocious standards, these are exceptionally deplorable developments and a cruel irony given that both have been declared 'de-escalation areas', he added.

According to OHCHR, between 4 and 9 February, at least 277 civilians are reported to have been killed, with 230 among them in airstrikes by the Syrian Government and its allies. A further 812 civilians are reported to have been injured.

In one of the worst incidents, a rolling series of airstrikes on residential areas of Duma (near the capital, Damascus) on 6 February reportedly killed at least 31 civilians, including 12 women and four children, and injured more than 100 others, including 37 children.

In the news release, the UN human rights wing also noted that numerous rockets and mortars continue to be fired from opposition-held areas into populated areas of Government-held capital Damascus and surrounding suburbs, with at least seven civilians reported killed and 18 others injured in various locations between 6 and 9 February.

Even by Syria's atrocious standards, these are exceptionally deplorable developments and a cruel irony given that both have been declared 'de-escalation areas' High Commissioner Zeid

Elsewhere in the war-ravaged country, fighting continues to take its toll with a number of civilians, including children, reportedly killed and injured in Afrin district in north-western Syria.

In the east of the country, civilian casualties are reported in airstrikes and ground-based strikes in areas still under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) primarily in Deir- ez-Zor governorate. However, the greatest threats now faced by civilians in such

areas are improvised explosive devices, unexploded ordinance and other explosive remnants of war.

***Violations of international law continue on a daily basis &#8211 UN rights chief***

In the news release, Mr. Zeid also said that the various Governments and some armed opposition groups professing to adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law, violations &#8220continue on a daily basis, despite the creation of so-called 'de-escalation areas' in 2017.&#8221

&#8220The term 'de-escalation area' is becoming all too reminiscent of the so-called &#8220safe areas&#8221 in Bosnia, which proved anything but safe, as we were starkly reminded during the recent trials of Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic,&#8221 he added, underscoring that the situation in Syria is &#8220crying out&#8221 to be referred to the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)), as well as for a much more concerted effort by UN Member States to bring peace.

&#8220The conduct and management of this war has been utterly shameful from the outset, and the failure to end it marks an epic failure of global diplomacy,&#8221 the High Commissioner stressed.