

PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the recent deterioration of the situation in north-west Syria

Recent attacks on a camp of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the bombing of a critical life-saving health facility close to the Turkish border are yet another deplorable escalation in the deteriorating situation in north-west Syria.

We express our most sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims.

While the European Union recognises the presence of UN-designated terrorist organisations in the region, indiscriminate attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, including health and education facilities, by the Syrian regime and its allies are unacceptable and must stop immediately.

These and other attacks should be thoroughly investigated by the UN Board of Inquiry for north-west Syria which commenced its work on 30 September 2019. We reiterate the EU's position that all perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity should be held accountable.

The EU recalls that all parties to the Syrian conflict are bound to respect and uphold international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Equally, they are obliged to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need. We expect the Syrian regime and the Astana guarantors to immediately fulfil their responsibilities and commitments, and ensure the protection of civilians. The EU also recalls the Sochi Memorandum of 17 September 2018 and calls on the parties involved to fully implement it.

The current violence not only exacerbates the suffering of civilians, notably as regards women and children, but also risks undermining the intra-Syrian talks in the framework of the Constitutional Committee which are scheduled to reconvene next week in Geneva under the aegis of UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen.

The EU continues to support an inclusive, genuine and comprehensive political solution according to UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué.

The Candidate Countries Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania* and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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