

Canada demands that Assad regime and backers stop violence now and respect human rights in Syria

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Statement

December 13, 2016 - Ottawa, Ontario - Global Affairs Canada

The Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, today issued the following statement amid reports of merciless attacks perpetrated by the Assad regime and its backers in eastern Aleppo and reported civilian killings and disappearances:

“Canada is appalled by the continued targeting of civilians, many of whom are now missing or reportedly shot and killed in the last 24 hours as they flee the carnage and the continued violent attacks perpetrated by the Syrian government forces. Hundreds of thousands of people remain in besieged areas across the country without humanitarian access. They are trapped, terrified and running out of time.

“We are witnessing atrocities in real time in Syria with total disregard for the lives of civilians by the Assad regime and its backers. The international community is watching closely. We must hold those responsible for this horrific massacre accountable for war crimes and for crimes against humanity. We call on the Assad regime and its backers—

Russia and Iran—to immediately stop the violence and uphold international humanitarian law, protecting all civilians in Syria, including rescue workers such as the White Helmets.

“Canada is seized with the plight of the Syrian people, and we are addressing the situation by rallying the international community on Syria at the UN, by providing life-saving humanitarian aid through UN institutions and NGOs in Syria, by supporting critical work of the White Helmets in Syria, by bringing accountability for the use of chemical weapons, by helping with the gathering of evidence to help victims to seek justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity and by welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada.

“On December 9, 122 countries stood up to the Syrian regime and its backers by adopting a Canada-led resolution at the United Nations General Assembly, sending a very strong and unified message to stop the violence now and to provide for rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and for the resumption of a peace process.

“Canada and the international community will continue to demand that the Assad regime and its backers stop all attacks on civilians, stop targeting hospitals, allow food and medicine to reach the needy and provide safe passage for those trying to alleviate the suffering.”

Quick facts

- On October 20, 2016, Canada, along with 73 other UN member states, successfully called for an informal session of the UN General Assembly to discuss the situation in Syria to pressure all parties involved to cease the strikes on the civilian population and to allow unhindered humanitarian access.
- As one of the 26 members of the International Syria Support Group, Canada has worked to reinvigorate peace efforts and to find solutions to address the ongoing conflict in Syria.
- Canada is supporting partners, such as the Commission for International Justice and Accountability, to seek justice for the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria and Iraq. Canada is also a major contributor to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Joint Investigative Mechanism on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.
- On December 6, 2016, the Government of Canada announced a \$4.5-million contribution to Mayday Rescue to support the White Helmets’ life-saving work in Syria. This contribution will allow the White Helmets to recruit and train female volunteers and establish new centres that will strengthen the organization’s reach and capacity to provide critical services to all Syrians in need, particularly women and girls.

- On February 8, 2016, the Government of Canada announced that it will be contributing \$1.6 billion over the next three years in a comprehensive and integrated regional response to the crises in Syria and Iraq, with a focus on security, stabilization, humanitarian and development assistance, and enhanced diplomatic engagement.

Associated links

- [UN General Assembly calls for action on Syria in Canada-led resolution](#)
- [December 9, 2016, UN General Assembly resolution on Syria](#)
- [Canada's response to the conflict in Syria](#)
- [Canada continues to lead efforts to mobilize UN General Assembly on Syria](#)

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