

Statement by the spokesperson on the situation in Idlib and northern Hama

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With the marked increase of airstrikes over Idlib province and northern Hama over the past weeks and days, we are once again running the risk of a dangerous escalation in Idlib. The civilian population cannot afford this risk: they have already suffered far too much.

Recent attacks have been on densely-populated areas, homes, medical facilities, and settlements for internally displaced people. They have resulted in yet more death and injury to innocent civilians. All parties must as a first priority protect the inhabitants of Idlib province, and ensure unhindered, safe and sustainable humanitarian access.

Under the Sochi agreement reached last September, the Astana guarantors committed to safeguard Idlib as a de-escalation zone. This agreement needs to hold: a military escalation in Idlib would put at risk the lives of more than three million civilians living in the region, result in further humanitarian catastrophe and risk further destabilisation in Syria and the region.

We continue to support the work of the UN Special Envoy, with a view to a genuine, inclusive and comprehensive political solution in Syria. Only a political process that respects the freedom and the dignity of all Syrian people in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué can bring about a lasting solution to the conflict.

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