



Concept Note

Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Infrastructure in North-West Syria: What *Does* International Humanitarian Law Say?

Friday 13 September 2019, 1.15-2.45pm

Conference Room 1, UN Headquarters

The Syria conflict continues to witness atrocities and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and disregard for the international rules-based system. In the Hama and Idlib governorates in north-west Syria we are witnessing a repeat of the military tactics deployed by Syrian and Russian forces in the taking of the city of Aleppo and eastern Ghouta which caused a disproportionately large number of civilian casualties, targeted civilian infrastructure, and created large-scale forced displacement. To date there has been insufficient deterrent to prevent this from happening or to reduce the civilian fallout.

Background

As the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator outlined in his last briefing to the UN Security Council on 29 August, violence in north-west Syria continues unabated, and is only being limited by the Government of Syria forces and their allies, and non-state armed groups. Since late April, over 500 civilians, many of them women and children, have lost their lives in airstrikes, while many hundreds more have been injured.

Since May over 576,000 people have been recorded as displaced, fleeing their homes in southern Idlib and northern Hama to escape the hostilities. That is three to four times the figure recorded during the violence in eastern Ghouta early last year. The UN has been clear that a worst-